JOAN!!!

A

NOVEL.

BY

MATILDA FITZJOHN.

K

You have no great pretenſions to wit or ſprightlineſs of genius.—I grant it.

MARC. ANTONIN.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Memory of
A DEPARTED FRIEND,
who to Beauty of Perſon, Elegance of
Manners, Solidity of Underſtanding, and
the Accompliſhments of
Genius and Education,
Added
the ſtill more valuable Graces of
A truly Chriſtian Character,
This Work,
begun under her encouragement, and
completed, alas! in the laſt hours of
ſocial intercourſe,
is inſcribed by her who beſt knew
her Worth,
and moſt enjoyed
her Confidence.

To the Memory of

A DEPARTED FRIEND,

who to Beauty of Person, Elegance of

Manners, Solidity of Understanding, and

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A truly Christian Character,

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begun under her encouragement, and

completed, alas! in the last hours of

Social intercourse,

is inscribed by her who best knew

Her Worth,

and most enjoyed

her Confidence.

ERRATA——VOL. I.

Page	64	Line	22	dele *to*
—	93	—	18	— *a*
—	94	—	20	insert before *Byram, Mr.*
—	126	—	1	for *favour* read *fervor*
—	131	—	8	— *unawares* read *unaware*
—	134	—	4	— *to her* read *her to*
—		—	7	— *deepe* read *deeper*
—	150	—	17	— *Dominie* read *Domine*
—	216	—	20	— *on* read *in*
—	228	—	3	— *recurred* read *occurred*

ERRATA——VOL. II.

Page	10	Line	2	for *ady* read *lady*
—	15	—	20	— *novels* read *morts*
—	76	—	16	— *countenence* read *countenance*
—	79	—	12	— *Jemima* read *Joanna*
—	81	—	11	— *Chatham* read *Chartham*
—	98	—	6	— *to* read *too*
—	107	—	7	— *at* read *it*
—	110	—	11	— *affection* read *affectation*
—	118	—	5	— *he* read *be*
—	132	—	19	— *who* read *whom*
—	172	—	14	— *solely* read *wholly*
—	241	—	13	after *how* insert *soon*
—	252	—	7	for *ro* read *to*
—	258	—	2	*repeat* read *repent*

ERRATA——VOL. III.

Page	14	Line	last	for *then* read *them*
—	22	—	19	— *alteration* read *attention*
—	120	—	last	— *perceived that* read *gave up*
—	160	—	11	— *spirits* read *spirit*
—	268	—	12	— *attacking* read *attaching*

ERRATA——VOL. IV.

Page	44	Line	18	for *of any* read *at any*
—	46	—	1	— *yet as* read *as yet*
—	78	—	6	dele ;
—	89	—	10	for *in* read *is*
—	104	—	1	— *who* read *whom*
—	161	—	23	— *daughter* read *daughters*
—	201	—	15	— *recourse* read *resource*
—	204	—	1	— after *Peregrina* insert *reached town.*

JOAN!!!

CHAP. I.

A Letter from the family apothecary, ſetting forth at large in *Angliciſed Latin*, or in *Latinized Engliſh*, what might perhaps have been nearly as well expreſſed in the ſentence, "Sir, your father is dangerouſly "ill with the gout in his ſtomach," rouſed the indolent ſpirit of Lambert Byram from its noon-tide doze. He was at the pains of reading the ſcientific epiſtle twice; and then, being ſatisfied that it did not contain any intimation of his father's wiſh to ſee him, he comforted himſelf that he was ſpared the neceſſity of a journey in November, and, thruſting the paper under his pillow, was about to repair the fracture of his nap,

when he was again disturbed by a *morning visit* from a fellow-idler who inhabited the same staircase, and who being too much the counterpart of Lambert to find better amusement, exerted himself so far as to swear he would see him *unkennelled*. They sat down to a lounging breakfast together, discussed what they could recollect of the pastimes of the former evening; and then Lambert, having no other topic ready, mentioned the letter he had just received. His friend, rather less dead to *prudence*, though perhaps equally uninfected with the superstitions of *duty*, having first kindly cursed Lambert for a fool, in suffering the old man to die without securing his own interests by his presence, insisted on his setting out instantly for Bath, ordered a chaise for the purpose, gave directions for packing his portmanteau; and having declined sharing his labours, saw him set off from the Temple, not without a hope that his friendly exertions would be repaid by the good effect this apparent filial piety might

produce

produce on the ſtate of a purſe, he often, notwithſtanding his natural apathy, was uſed to apply to.

Impelled by no affection, occupied by no anxiety, young Byram felt in all their force the inconveniences attendant on his way and the ſeaſon of the year: he therefore needed little argument to induce him to accept the urgent offer of an old friend of his father's, who entered the town of Reading on horſeback, with his chaiſe, and who recognizing him before they reached the inn, which leaves behind it all that the place has to boaſt of chearfulneſs, hailed him, and preſſed him to ſpend the evening with him at his vicarage, about a mile and half off. The parſon led the way: the poſt-boy followed; and Lambert felt ſomething like the glow of ſatisfaction, or at leaſt of animal warmth, when he found himſelf ſeated in a neat parlour near a good fire. It diſturbed not his placid ſpirit to perceive evident ſymp-

toms of female flight on his approach: he heard without concern the clatter of high heels, and the thouſand appeals to the diligence of the ſervants. A conſultation, which appeared a neceſſary prelude to the ſupper, reached his ears in accents that beſpoke no unanimity between his hoſt and ſome one of not much inferior authority; but the matter was preſently adjuſted: a decanter of good port followed the maſter of the houſe in his return to the parlour; and Byram had almoſt forgotten the errand he was neglecting, and forgiven the previous diſcontents of his journey, when the buſtle of ſupper-preparation, which till then had been heard, like the din of war, only at a diſtance from ſocial life, pervaded the apartment, and diſcompoſed him by ſetting the major part of the furniture in motion. An ancient damſel, whoſe buſtling habiliments declared her not to have had time to ſit down ſince ſhe left her toilet, followed by a clear-complexioned girl, whom Byram almoſt opened

his

his eyes to look at, entered, performed the pantomime of ſetting out the table, and then withdrew. To this manœuvre ſucceeded perfect ſilence; the ſupper being then ſpoiling, by waiting till the young lady of the houſe ſhould have completed her endeavours to charm the handſome ſtranger from *Lunnon*, who had been moſt emphatically deſcribed to her by experienced Rachel, and on whom her father, the Reverend Anſelm Rufford, had in five minutes after he had ſecured Byram for his gueſt, turned his thoughts for his ſon-in-law. With admonitions to his wife to ſhew by her table *how well they were to do in the world*, he had mixed ſome hints to his darling daughter, calculated to have embarraſſed timidity, and equally well ſuited to render confidence diſguſting.

Mr. Rufford was a man whoſe courſe of life had uniformly tended to enamour him of the good things of this world, without encreaſing his practical acquaintance with

its viciſſitudes: he *could* indeed, and frequently *did* deſcant from the pulpit on the inſtability of human poſſeſſions, the little value of life's beſt comforts, and the frail tenure by which we hold even our exiſtence; but as in his clerical orations he ſeldom truſted himſelf beyond the compoſition of an *oleo*, he was not greatly to be reproved if his greedineſs of church-preferments, and his aſſiduous indulgence of ſome propenſities not much allied to abſtinence, militated in a trifling degree againſt the precepts he held forth once a week to the ruſtics of his pariſh of Milham Parva. He had ſpent the early part of his life on his father's farm, to which he would have ſucceeded, had he not been allured to take orders by the proſpect of equal advantage with leſs labour: he had ſhuffled through the common routine of college exerciſes, juſt ſteering clear of diſgrace and reprobation; and as he aimed more at ſubſtantial gratifications, than at the chimeras ſought by the votaries of fame, he felt no aukward ſenſations

tions of conſcious inferiority, when a valuable family friend, to whom a tottering reputation made obſequiouſneſs very grateful, heaped on him a plenitude of church-benefices. His clerical income thus exceeding the uſual average of country preferments, he was enabled to gratify his principal paſſion, which was good eating, without abridging himſelf of any of thoſe other neceſſaries of life, which inſolence makes covetouſneſs gaſp for.

A mode of life exactly the ſize, or perhaps a little larger, than the means of ſupporting it, might have abated ſome part of the felicity Mr. Rufford looked on as his birthright, had he ſuffered himſelf to be anxious for thoſe who might exiſt after him; but his daughter, dear as ſhe was to him, he conſidered as ſufficiently provided for, by three thouſand pounds bequeathed to her by a relation; and his wife, he thought, he ſhould outlive: perhaps hope increaſed his belief—at all events, he thought ſhe

had ſo good a chance of being provided for, either by a dependence on her daughter, or by thoſe inſtitutions which befriend the diſtreſſed relatives of the church, that he could not abridge his own comforts, to provide for a contingency ſo improbable, as her wiſhing he had died in affluence.

Perhaps it was Mr. Rufford's penetration of his wife's character that made him eaſy in his conduct—She was what is ſo emphatically expreſſed in our vulgar tongue, by the term *a daudle*: in her opinions ſhe was poſitive, and in her mode of enforcing them often violent; but her energies were not laſting enough to ſhew themſelves in action: ſhe lived for herſelf, a cypher in ſociety.

No ſuch negative character was Miſs Rufford. She had been neglected by her mother, and flattered by her father, from her earlieſt infancy; and taking due advantage of her ſituation, ſhe ruled in all matters,

matters, excepting thoſe of the table, where her father was lord paramount.—Let it not be ſuppoſed, however, that the important Miſs Rufford condeſcended to inſpect the œconomics of the houſehold—it was her temper, not her underſtanding, or her forethought, that governed the family—the executive part ſhe performed by deputy, ſtill, however, exquiſitely tenacious of her ſuppoſed rights, and uſurping in all points, except where blame was to be apprehended, the tribute paid to domeſtic prudence.

She had reached the reſpectable age of thirty-five, not indeed without opportunities of exchanging her life of celibacy; but the invincible fortification her three thouſand pounds had proved to her pride, had always kept her in waiting for a ſuperior offer; and as ſhe had as yet ſmitten nothing higher than an apothecary, ſhe could boldly aſſert her preference of a ſingle life. The whole buſineſs of her exiſtence being to

make viſits, and prepare for making them, her intellectual faculties were uncorrupted by education; but a certain acrimony of nature, which the honeſt vivacity of her tongue never allowed her to diſguiſe, made her ſometimes appear deficient either in good ſenſe or good nature, and therefore leſs acceptable, than a gentlewoman ſo little entitled to ſuperiority, is generally found in a rural card-party. In inertneſs ſhe might have reſembled her mother; for the whole year could not produce a veſtige of her induſtry; but her father's temper predominating, with the addition of ſome natural qualities, rendered her ſelfiſh, artful, malicious, and buſy.

To theſe two ladies was Lambert Byram introduced as they entered the room; and either to Mr. Rufford's port wine, or to ſomething peculiarly *attractive*, we will preſume, in the appearance of his daughter, it is to be attributed, that he rivetted his eyes on her with a broad ſtare—The exertion

exertion was not loſt on the lady—a ſmile of infinite ſelf-complacency ſpread itſelf over her countenance, and dilated a ſet of features which, in their natural ſtate of contraction, depicted all the cramp of a narrow mind. She ſaw, and ſeeing rejoiced, that the pains ſhe had juſt beſtowed on her decorations, had gained her at leaſt attention; and indeed it muſt have been a ſtill more drowſy mortal than even Lambert Byram, who would have ſuffered Miſs Rufford, arrayed in all the contraſts of colours, and all the eccentricities of whim and taudrineſs, to paſs unregarded.

The company were ſeated at ſupper: Lambert had recovered his twiſting features from an expreſſion they were not much accuſtomed to; Mrs. Rufford had ſlopped ſome fricaſee into his plate, by way of helping him. Mr. Rufford had named his liquors; and Miſs Rufford had ſmirked and fidgetted, as long as her appetite would permit her to neglect her favourite

meal of ſupper, when Lambert, who had in vain endeavoured to comprehend ſome parts of her dreſs, finding his curioſity irreſiſtible, indulged in a topographical ſurvey of her figure, and by this ſeemingly inevitable return of his eyes to their former poſition, at the ſame moment convinced the young lady that ſhe had conquered, and her father that his plan muſt ſucceed. —Lambert, fearing to truſt himſelf with too much contemplation, recalled his thoughts, by inviting Mrs. Rufford to take a glaſs of wine—ſhe declining it, her huſband put in a ſeaſonable word for his Sally, by offering her as a ſubſtitute for her mamma; and Sally, with giggle in the extremities of her puckered mouth, and goggle in her extended eyes, ſeized the opportunity of naming Mr. Byram, and pouring on him the whole force of her features.

No idea ever diſturbed the adventurous Sarah, that Byram, whoſe ſituation ſhe was not ignorant of, and whoſe very outline declared

declared him to have lived not only in London, but in what is called *the world*, muſt, with eyes not at all favourable to her pretenſions, ſee her aukward endeavour to be *genteel*. That he muſt of neceſſity be accuſtomed to whatever can be obtained in a metropolis towards poliſhing the female form and manners, and therefore might draw compariſons not at all to her advantage, was a ſentiment of diffidence that never entered that cavity of her head, which perhaps Nature forgot to furniſh with brains. She had unqueſtionably, and ſhe was convinced irrevocably, fixed his attention: love, or at leaſt the profeſſion of it, followed of courſe: no difficulty obſtructed the rapid ſuggeſtion of her thoughts—ſhe was wooed—ſhe was won—ſhe was Mrs. Byram—ſhe ſaw herſelf in that zenith of happineſs ſhe had once ſeen and ever ſighed for, *London, and a coach.*

Superfluous removes crowned the nauſeous plenty of a meal, where ſweets obliterated pungency, and acids efferveſced with alka-

alkalines. Sarah, the all-accompliſhed Sarah! whoſe moments ſince the entrance of Byram had been devoted but to one, and that a very different object, was extolled with every heap her father piled on his plate, for her exquiſite adroitneſs in the culinary art. Horace's art of poetry furniſhed his torturing imagination with precepts that corroborated her claims to praiſe—here was *ſeaſoning*; here was *reliſh*; here was the *utile* with the *dulce*—here were all the ingredients of the Epic, the Sapphic—here was the *adonicus* of a latent flavour, which reſted on the palate—here were—O here were all the nonſenſe and pedantry that an univerſity education, beſtowed on folly, uſually brings forth to entertain *friends*; and all the frothy ebullition of that ſpecies of hilarity which tends to deject the ſpirits of all but the performers.

Byram, who had been uſed to ſuperior ſociety, and whoſe natural talents were ſuch as even exceſſive indolence could not ſpoil, was

was ſoon weary of theſe attempts to amuſe him, and ſoon aware of the drift of Mr. Rufford's vivacity, and Miſs Rufford's glances. He knew his own powers of pleaſing; but there was nothing to encourage him even to make himſelf merry at the expence of beings ſo contemptible; and he turned from the vapid and the pert to the inſipid, hoping to find in Mrs. Rufford's no-pretenſions, ſome relief from volatile nonſenſe; but her fair complexion and pearl-coloured eyes, her receding mouth, and ſcarcely-dividing lips, though they beſpoke the extreme of content, ſoon chilled him, when he found them truly the index of a mind incapable of any other conceptions, than thoſe of the comforts in which ſhe nurſed herſelf. His thoughts, now rather impelled than obſtructed, wandered to his father; and he would have made an excuſe of the neceſſity of riſing early to have broke away; but the clamorous urgency with which the old gentleman and his daughter beſought him to take his

breakfaſt

breakfaſt with them, would not permit it, even had it not been enforced by the *energies* of the lady of the houſe herſelf, who, having taſted the old beer, the Trinity audit, two or three times at ſupper, and concluded her repaſt with a few brandy cherries, and mixed *a little weak* punch for herſelf, now with tears, but not of ſorrow, in her eyes, hoped Mr. Byram would not be ſo unkind as to leave their cottage ſo ſoon as the next day, when ſhe flattered herſelf ſhe could ſhew him a few of the beauties of the neighbourhood, at a little ſnug dance they were invited to.—This was going farther than papa and Sarah deſigned; but the one twitched Mrs. Rufford by the ſleeve; and the other ſcreamed in a higher tone of leſs cordiality to no purpoſe; for Byram had heard of the dance; and though it was an exerciſe his apathy ſeldom allowed him to join in, he, being ignorant of the country, had ſome curioſity to ſee, whether Miſs Rufford was only *one of many*, or an *unique*.

CHAP. II.

LAMBERT took his leave for the night, however, undetermined; and on entering his chamber, felt all his thoughts concentered in himſelf and the preſent moment; for the chill of a beſt room met him; and a fire, which appeared to have been kindled within the laſt five minutes, ſeemed inadequate to warming the ſpacious gloomy apartment.—Not caring to give trouble, he undreſſed, and went to bed, and was juſt ſo far diſmiſſing Miſs Rufford's taudry figure from his eyes, as to cloſe them in a doze, when he found the powerful attraction of his own warmth in the docility with which all the linen round him followed him as he ſtirred. It was now too dangerous a ſituation to remain in: he was forced to riſe; and finding nothing that he could truſt,

truſt, as leſs noxious, to paſs the night in, he unwillingly rang his bell.—The old ſervant and the cherry-cheeked girl ſtripped the bed; but the evil was in the bed itſelf: the old woman muttered ſomething about Miſs's orders, and her having told Miſs it would be ſo; but that Miſs liked to have her own way, and choſe the gentleman ſhould have the beſt room; and then the nymphs departed, promiſing to deviſe ſome means for the ſhivering gentleman's more comfortable lodging.

In a few minutes he received a requeſt from this veteran Abigail to follow her, where he might be ſure of a well-aired room and bed; and he was ſhewn into a very neat, ſmall chamber, furniſhed very ordinarily, but ſo exquiſitely nice, and ſo decorated with little efforts of taſte, that he almoſt forgot his fatigue and vexation, while, with the candle in his hand, he examined ſome very moderate attempts at drawing, ſome paper cuttings, and ſome miniature

miniature profiles of the family, with which one ſide of the apartment was almoſt covered. Wondering whither he had got, and curious to know whoſe apartment it was, he was ſoon convinced, by the furniture of a ſmall dreſſing table, that he had ejected ſome female of the family.

He then ſurveyed, with admiration, ſome very delicate baſkets and boxes of fillagree, and other elegant manufactures; and ſuppoſing he muſt be in Miſs Rufford's apartment, he took the precaution which her encouraging manner rendered not abſurd, to undraw the bed curtains, that he might be ſure he had the room to himſelf. Finding no one to witneſs his inquiſitiveneſs, he proceeded to open ſome books that lay on the window.—They were ſuch as beſpoke good taſte, and at leaſt a wiſh to be acquainted with foreign languages; for in a Metaſtaſio he found an incomplete tranſlation of one of the moſt pathetic ſcenes; in a volume of Pere Bourdaloüe, he found a

page

page rendered into Engliſh, and again into the original language; and in a Lilly's Grammar, he found a tranſcript of a noun, incorrectly declined.

The faults of Byram's mind included none of the hoſtile tribe. He began to amend his opinion of Miſs Rufford: he put the faireſt conſtruction on endeavours that implied a good diſpoſition of mind: he gave her credit for having in the courſe of the preceding evening made no pedantic diſplay of her accompliſhments; but yet he felt a difficulty in reconciling the elaborate external of this lady with purſuits that muſt occupy more of the mind than *fine miſſes* can ſpare from themſelves: a ſarcaſtic ſmile might perhaps glance over his countenance, when he conceived he ſaw in the lady's books an excuſe for his damp chamber; but he conſidered that ſhe had made all poſſible atonement; and he retired to reſt in great good humour with her head, if not with its

its accoutrements; and his benevolence towards her was conſiderably augmented, by his finding when he lay down that he had had a recent predeceſſor in his lodging, for the bed was not yet cold. He was now as much vexed as ever in his life by the apprehenſion that her politeneſs had made her riſe to accommodate him, yet he thought it hardly poſſible, as he had taken leave of her in the parlour—yet he decided that it muſt be Miſs Rufford, and he accordingly went to ſleep with Miſs Rufford's virtues and endowments in his head.

He roſe early in the morning with a very proper reſolution to proceed to Bath, as ſoon as he could get away; and with ſome difficulty ſteered his way to the lower part of the houſe; when by turning wrong he found himſelf, not in the room he had ſpent the former evening in, but in a paſſage which was cloſed by a glaſs door with a ſcanty curtain drawn before it. Here his

his attention was caught by a few imperfect ſounds from a feeble muſical inſtrument; and, going forward, he, unobſerved, perceived a female in a morning dreſs, ſitting at an old ſpinnet, betraying evidently the want of a teacher, and a vehement but deſpairing earneſtneſs to accompliſh what ſhe was attempting: fearful of being ſeen, he ſtaid only long enough to ſuppoſe this perſonage Miſs Rufford, whoſe perſevering ſpirit was to be inferred from the brick-floor of the apartment, which appeared to have no fire place, and from the extreme cold of the morning.

At length he found the parlour, and having amuſed himſelf with the literary furniture of the ſide-board till ten o'clock, he was joined, firſt by Miſs Rufford, in whoſe favour Cupid had ſo violently ſhaken his heart. She could ſcarcely forbear telling him how diligent ſhe had been to gain the firſt tête-á-tête with him—ſhe appeared to him to have changed her dreſs

ſince

ſince he ſaw her in the cold hall, and was now fidgetting and friſking in all the buſtle of buttons too ſtubborn to meet button holes, and of a dreſs too ſtiff to give any idea of drapery.

Diſguſted with the nonſenſe of her manners, Lambert returned to his firſt ideas of her; but yet curious to know if it was really herſelf whom he had ſo unſeaſonably diſplaced at midnight, he politely expreſſed his concern; and the reception it met with confirmed his opinion. She acquitted herſelf of the imputation of neglect, by transferring the blame of the reeking bed on *Joan*, by whom he underſtood the maid ſervant, who had excuſed herſelf by the ſame charitable method. He now paſſed ſome compliments on the imagined attainments of his companion, which ſhe did not ſeem at firſt to comprehend—he ſuppoſed this the diſguiſe of modeſty; for on more explicitly adverting to her knowledge of languages, ſhe confeſſed that at boarding ſchool

ſchool ſhe had been *learned to talk French.* Lambert forbore to enquire farther, and was again at a loſs to reconcile Miſs Rufford and herſelf.

The breakfaſt apparatus now entered: Mr. Rufford followed with an apology for the abſence of his lady, who he gave his gueſt to underſtand could no otherwiſe get through the fatigues of the day than by conſuming one half of it in ſleep. Miſs Rufford, to whom Byram ſuppoſed he was to be beholden for the donation of his breakfaſt, ſat friſking and giggling as uſual. He expected her to riſe and begin the neceſſary proceſs; but he waited in vain: he then, to quicken the family-diligence, aſked how he ſhould procure a chaiſe from Reading, as he wiſhed to be gone immediately after breakfaſt. This was duly oppoſed; but one point ſeemed gained by the attempt; for Miſs Rufford rang the bell, and in a ſtyle of command, ordered *Joan* to come in and make the tea.

The

The deuce is in it! thought Byram. What—Is it the Berkſhire faſhion to have the maid in to portion out a breakfaſt? he did not much like the idea—it produced another reſolution to be gone quickly; and he prepared to eat his meal in dudgeon.

Joan inſtantly made her appearance, to the utter diſtraction of all Lambert's former prejudices and ideas. Inſtead of the chambermaid he had expected, he ſaw a young woman who ſeemed not to have attained her nineteenth year, and whom he inſtantly recognized as the anxious practitioner on the ſpinnet. Every attribute of good ſenſe, good nature, induſtry, &c. &c. which he had ſo laviſhly given to Miſs Rufford, he now withdrew to beſtow them, where indeed they more properly belonged, and where they were rendered ſtill more attractive by external recommendations which at once rouſed to animation all his dormant faculties. He was ſtill, however, puzzled—there was

ſomething incongruous in the appearance of *Joan*, and the manner in which ſhe was conſidered by the family. She was called, ſhe was blamed, like a ſervant--ſhe looked like a being infinitely ſuperior to the reſt of the houſhold.

No introduction announced Byram and herſelf to each other: ſteady gravity, and ſomething akin to diffident reſerve, were in her countenance; but ſhe acquitted herſelf with eaſe and politeneſs; and though ſhe was allowed no part in the converſation, and Miſs Rufford pertly anſwered for her, whenever he addreſſed her, her mode of attention indicated as ſtrongly a refined underſtanding, as her patient toleration of evident contempt did an humble temper.

The petty arts of the ill deſigning generally defeat their own purpoſes; and may Heaven ever continue this comfortable reflection to thoſe unfortunately ſubject to them!

them! In the tyrannical diſpoſition to blame, which the old gentleman took no pains to diſguiſe; and in the inceſſant endeavours of his daughter to cruſh humility, Lambert ſaw the malignity of their natures, and thence inferred the merit of their victim. He imagined her ſuch as ſhe truly was, helpleſs, friendleſs, dependent, amiable. Bath and his father again vaniſhed into air; and if he thought on any thing but the object before him, it was on the beſt means to be deviſed for prolonging his ſtay at Milham.

The exterior of the depreſſed *Joan* was an obſtacle to Miſs Rufford's plans, that even her ſhallow capacity could duly judge of. Her glaſs could reflect, blindly partial as ſhe was to her own perſon, no ſuch form as that of the ill-treated family dependent. A diſpoſition to grow fat, which her appetite and her indolence encouraged, had entirely ruined all her pretenſions to *genteelneſs*, which in the early

part of her life, ſhe had conſtrued as ſynonymous with length and lankneſs. Now, indeed, her opinion had a little varied; but a rude mantua-maker had ſo often excuſed her miſtakes in her buſineſs, by pleading to Miſs Rufford that ſhe grew *ſtouter* every year, that ſhe could not conceal from herſelf ſome latent fear that ſhe might be rather clumſy. She had ſtudied her features with all the pertinacity of ſelf-prejudice—ſhe ſaw their want of ſymmetry; but ſhe perſuaded herſelf ſhe had a certain agreeable ſmartneſs in her countenance which a due attention to dreſs would ſet forward in the claſs of prettineſs. She therefore dreſſed up to this idea; and the real character of her viſage being heavy and louring, ſhe was ever miſtaken in her ſmirks and her faſhions.

The contraſt with which *Joan* tormented her, conſiſted in a perſon very far removed from any of Miſs Rufford's conceptions of beauty; but which, for what reaſon ſhe never

never could gueſs, was admired by all, and attractive even to herſelf: it had no claim to the praiſe of ſkeleton-proportions; it boaſted none of the majeſty of height, or the languor of ſickneſs; it indicated youth and a degree of health, though far from robuſt, yet uninjured by indolence or folly.

Miſs Rufford's ſagacity ſoon perceived the alienation of Lambert's eyes. She, however, derived comparative comfort from the ſmall portion of *captivation* which her competitor had thought proper to diſplay; for *Joan's* hair, and a great part of the beauty of her face, were hid by a large morning cap, which in Lambert's opinion atoned for its privations by its exceſſive neatneſs: her whole dreſs expreſſed by its cleanlineſs, the purity of her mind and her juſt idea of propriety, while Miſs Rufford's hair *en papillottes*, was exhibiting from the ambuſh of a ſcanty cap, crowned with a dreſs bonnet *of many colours*.

Foolishly angry, not with the contraſt ſhe herſelf formed, but that which ſhe aſcribed to her deſpiſed rival, her humour changed; and diſcontent got the better of the graces, the ſmiles, and the loves. She no longer preſſed Mr. Byram's ſtay: ſhe rated Joan with all the provocation of taunting language: ſhe pouted at her father when he attempted to be gay: ſhe ſcouled at Lambert; and, but for the imprudence of the meaſure, could have quitted the field of battle in diſguſt.

CHAP. III.

The breakfaſt being concluded, Miſs Rufford, driving Joan before her, left the room; and no reaſonable cauſe of diſpleaſure offering itſelf, ſhe began to ſcold her for the pains ſhe had taken to allure Mr. Byram by her dreſs and deportment. She was aſked what buſineſs ſhe had to put on a clean cap and gown. The anſwer that the one ſhe had worn three days, and the other a fortnight, was no ſatisfaction: her *taking* airs were then complained of—there was no better defence againſt this charge; for ſhe was told that ſeeming *humbleneſs* and *ſimpleneſs* were her arts. Joan burſt into tears, and flew to her daily drudgery, that ſhe might forget in her duties for the family, the injuries ſhe had received from them.

In the mean time, Lambert attempted to learn from Mr. Rufford the ſituation of this charming young woman, and would have proceeded to ſpeak his ſentiments, had he not been diſcouraged by the frigid anſwers his enquiries met with. 'She is, Sir,' ſaid the preacher of fraternal love and all the charities of life, 'ſhe is the daughter of a ſcoundrel, with whom, to my misfortune, I got acquainted at St. John's: he was then the heir to a very conſiderable patrimony; and I hoped it would have been in his power to have done ſomething for me, or elſe I ſhould not have courted his acquaintance. He married imprudently, and his father diſinherited him. I never ſaw him after that; for I ſaw he was not in a way to do himſelf or any body any good. He died ſoon afterwards of a broken heart for the loſs of his wife, and had the aſſurance to leave me his child to maintain.'

'And do you not,' ſaid Byram, after a pauſe of real humanity, 'do not you, Sir, maintain

maintain this child with love and joy? Could any other friend have left you so valuable a bequeſt? O what rapture to ſave, to protect, to cheriſh, this laſt bloſſom of a froſt-nipt plant!'

'Heyday! young gentleman,' returned Mr. Rufford, with a ſtill more petrifying aſpect, and alarmed for his dear Sarah's ſucceſs, which he had been wiſe enough to aſſure her was certain; 'why, I hope you are not in love with this charity-miſs.'

Byram had prudence enough to perceive that hypocriſy was neceſſary: he pretended to advert only to the ſituation of her father; and a few ſmooth words laid reverend ſagacity aſleep.

Mr. Rufford then, as if willing to make ſure of his meaning, plainly propoſed to him *a family alliance*, and begged him when he arrived at Bath, to mention to his father, Sir Clifford Byram, his wiſh that the long-

ſtanding intimacy between them might be cemented by a marriage.—Aſtoniſhment, and an averſion to being rude, ſealed the young man's lips, while the zealous parent, encouraged and exulting, proceeded to deſcant on Sally's good qualities, amongſt which he enumerated making a ſhirt and a pudding.

It has been objected to an early acquaintance with the world, that it tends to conceit and pertneſs. It has undoubtedly produced, in many inſtances, thoſe unpleaſant fruits; but it would be error to infer from thence the ſecurity of a ſecluſion from ſociety, while the mind, its habits and pretenſions are forming. To have nothing ſuperior to ourſelves to compare our attainments with, is evidently dangerous to preſumptuous diſpoſitions, by producing ſelf-complacency; and to tempers eaſily diſcouraged no leſs ſo, as productive of romantic ideas of the excellence of others, and conſequently of our own particular

ticular deficiencies.—It may be truly anſwered, that good ſenſe will, even in ſolitude, go far towards forming a correct eſtimate of our progreſs—but alas! good ſenſe is not the characteriſtic feature of every mind that needs its guidance; at leaſt, it was no part of the compoſition of Mr. Rufford, or his daughter: he had never mixed farther in the world than was neceſſary to his making his way through it; and ſhe, ſatisfied with doating approbation, neither ſaw nor heeded excellence, unleſs her envy ſtumbled on it. It was to this blind ignorance of all compariſon, that the old gentleman was indebted for the courage neceſſary to making ſo bold a propoſition to a young man, who wanted nearly a year of being of age, and whoſe expectations from his father were equal to the elegant rank the family maintained, as that of an union with a woman, his inferior in every thing but age. At any other time, Lambert Byram would have ſuffered contemptuous ſilence to indicate

his refuſal; but *Joan*, ſweet *Joan!* was in his thoughts; and he anſwered temperately, though not encouragingly, that matrimony was a ſubject he had not yet turned his thoughts to.—Mr. Rufford adviſed him by all means to think on it—he talked of Sally's three thouſand pounds, and jeſuitically hinted at his farther intentions for her.—Byram interrupted the converſation, by again requeſting, though with abated urgency, that a chaiſe might be procured for him; but his hoſt, inferring like his daughter, that whoever liſtened muſt be captivated, was more earneſt than before, and furniſhed Lambert with a very decent pretext for deferring his journey. Matters being thus adjuſted for his remaining where he was, till the next day, he was left alone, while Mr. Rufford went to inform the ladies of his condeſcenſion. He was at no loſs to employ this half hour: for the firſt time, in his remembrance, he felt buſy, and reſolute to make the moſt of the paſſing day:

—he

—he could form no plan till he heard how he was to ſpend it, and this he learnt of Mr. Rufford at his return: he found the family dined at two, till which hour the ladies, or at leaſt Miſs Rufford, intended herſelf the pleaſure of working in the parlour.

Mr. Rufford excuſed himſelf for thus leaving him to his family, by pleading a burying and other parochial duty; but Byram's wits were ſet to an edge; he ſaw the contrivance, and determined to avail himſelf of it to the beſt of his power. He profeſſed himſelf perfectly ſatisfied with the morning ſcheme, but not ſo with that for the evening, when Mr. Rufford promiſed to introduce him to his club at the White-Hart. — The renovated Cymon, grown bold through neceſſity, intimated his having heard of a ball in the neighbourhood, and begged he might, if not an improper addition, be of the ladies' party. To this Mr. Rufford, as if the matter

matter had been previouſly ſettled in conclave, objected, by ſaying he had only a chaiſe which would take no more than *the ladies* and *Joan*, about whoſe being preſent at the dance, he ſaid, a great rout was made by the lady who gave it.—This was ſufficient information for the novice in love: he propoſed to walk over to Reading to order a chaiſe, not without hope that he might contrive to obtain the contemned Joan, either for his companion or his partner. His reſolution was proof againſt all ſtudied evaſions; he removed every difficulty as it occurred, and Miſs Rufford preſently after entered the parlour, and ſat down as ſoon as her father withdrew, purpoſely to be made love to.

Her work was the contrivance of decorations for the evening—pink was ſewed upon green; and blue was held up to it for choice of effect—all the hoſtile materials of a country milliner's ſhop, were brought in turns into contact, with an inſanity of genius, perhaps increaſed by the circumſtances

ſtances of the hour.—The newſpaper had come in; and Lambert was glancing his eye over it, civilly reading now and then a paragraph, but more intent on his hope that Joan would join them; but ſhe not appearing, and Miſs Rufford ſeeming impatient of the newſpaper, he ventured to aſk if he could not at the ſame time amuſe her and her fair companion, by a book.

'Companion? ſir,' repeated the ſpinſter, in the deepeſt tones her organs could utter;—'I don't know who you may mean by *companion:* I keep no *companion.* If you mean Joan, I would have you underſtand that young perſon to be a dependent on our family, and no companion of mine. Companion indeed!—I am never ſo badly off for company, as to ſit with my own ſervant.—Miſs Joan pleaſes to give herſelf a great deal too many airs, that I think would better become her to go without them—She is only a great deal too much indulged—ſhe wants to be a fine accom-

pliſhed

pliſhed lady, as if ſhe had a boarding-ſchool education; but I ſhall put a ſtop to it preſently—I don't ſee what ſuch girls have to do, but to work at their needle, and mind the family that they eat the bread of.' All this and much more was uttered with a convulſive agitation that almoſt jerked the lady's head from her ſhoulders, while the malignant expreſſion of her features, the tears that ſtood ſtarting in her eyes, and the impediment to her utterance, which ſounded in her throat, ſhewed how formidable a rival, notwithſtanding all her contempt, ſhe thought her dependent.

Lambert was determined to take no notice of her expreſſions or her ill humour; but all he heard and ſaw ſtimulated him to be expeditious. He again civilly offered to read, and begged Miſs Rufford to chuſe the author and the ſubject. In choaking ſilence, ſhe reached her work baſket, and drew forth Congreve's

greve's Love for Love!!!—Byram could not but admire her taſte and the *delicacy* of her ideas—he entered on his taſk, not a little delighted with the opportunity ſhe gave him of puniſhing her for her ill nature—he read, without ſkipping, and gave due emphaſis, by tone, eyes, and features, to all the ſtrong expreſſions of the author; —but his revenge was inane. Miſs Rufford joined his laugh, and forgot the diſturbance of her temper in the wit of the performance—ſhe commended as *nature*, all that moſt of her ſex would have been deaf to, and completed Lambert's deteſtation of her, by ſhewing, that even common decency was as much a ſtranger to her vacuum of underſtanding as common good nature—he could not, as he ſhut the book, and ſhe ogled him, as if expecting him now to play the lover whoſe part he had read, forbear ironically complimenting her on her taſte; and declaring ſhe was the only lady of his acquaintance to whom he would have read Love for Love.

She

She took the firſt part of the declaration for an expreſſion of preference, and the laſt for a figurative mode of divulging his paſſion! and Miſs Rufford would have grown too formidable, had not the knives and forks ſounded a retreat.——Byram juſt then recollected that he was not as neat as he uſually ſat down to table; but Miſs Rufford urged him to poſtpone dreſſing, as ſhe ſhould, till after dinner—he had his intended walk to Reading in his head, and therefore acquieſced. Preſently appeared the old gentleman, juſt returned from his pious labors, and his dame, who now firſt made her *entrée* amongſt her family. They ſat down to table: to Byram's great mortification Joan was ſtill abſent, and he began to grow weary of the civility he thought it prudent to adopt. The leg of mutton was about to depart, when Mrs. Rufford, as if juſt waking, obſerved that Joan would come ſoon, and haggled a ſlice out for her, againſt her arrival: it was chilled on the plate

plate when the ill-treated girl came in: without the leaſt deficiency of good breeding or chearfulneſs, ſhe prepared to take her ſeat, but remained ſtanding till ſhe had heard from Mr. Rufford a very ſcientific reprehenſion of the caper ſauce—ſhe mildly promiſed to amend the error in future. A momentary elevation of her hands and eyes beſpoke her pious thankfulneſs, and in peace and humility ſhe ate her untempting allowance—her trembling hands all the while proclaiming that it was ſome ſervile drudgery which had detained her from the table.

During the meal, which he hoped fully occupied the attention of the moſt vigilant of the company, Byram repeated his endeavours to engage Joan in converſation; but Miſs Rufford was a Cerberus no ſop could quiet, and he was obliged to give up the point. The two younger ladies quitted the table very quickly. The elder one, ſeeming totally inert, remained, and

their

their gueſt moved to begin his walk; but this trouble Mr. Rufford had kindly ſaved him, by beſpeaking the chaiſe when he went to read the papers at Reading.

When Byram went to dreſs, he was conducted to the room he had evacuated the night before, and when he was ready to make his appearance, he in his way to the parlour was completely mortified by ſeeing in one of the chambers, Joan in her morning dreſs very buſily aſſiſting Miſs Rufford.—He now deſpaired of any opportunity of introducing himſelf to her, and was almoſt tempted to employ the chaiſe beſpoke for him, for the better purpoſe of viſiting his father: he was however unwilling to give up his laſt chance; but not a hope remained when, at five o'clock, Joan entered *en deſhabille*, to make Mr. Rufford's tea, and was detained, as if on purpoſe, by his ſlopping and prating, till it was within twenty minutes of ſix, when he had been told they were to de-

part;

part; yet ſhe ſhewed no impatience. Made obſtinate and imprudent by the cruelty he witneſſed, he reſolved in his own mind not to go, if ſhe was left behind; and little farther was wanting to provoke him to ſpeak too freely.

But matters were not ſo untoward in reality, as they had been in aſpect.—In a few minutes, and while Mrs. Rufford and her daughter were abſent to give themſelves the laſt finiſh, Joan returned, and by her improved appearance aſcertained his promiſed felicity.—He could not forbear expreſſing his joy and ſurprize. She took no notice of the former, but to his wonder at her celerity, ſhe replied without any embarraſſment, that being accuſtomed to be called while ſhe was dreſſing, and ſtudying chiefly in her decorations œconomy of time as well as of expence, ſhe was ſeldom long at her toilet. 'I have only to comb my hair and change a coloured dreſs

dreſs for a white one, and then I am,' ſaid ſhe, 'as fine as my ſituation ever requires.'

Byram could not forbear replying, though he began to feel awed by his ſituation.—'No ſolicitude could be ſo ſucceſsful, madam, as your ſtyle of dreſs;' and indeed Byram's taſte was not inaccurate; for a countenance, adorned with ſome of Nature's beſt features, and enlightened by all the amiable and ingenuous expreſſions that the mind could give it, needed no other ornament than her profuſion of light brown hair, which curling negligently over her forehead, gave a ſhade to her eyes, and hung in a thouſand ringlets on her ſhoulders, confined only by a ſimple ornament to keep its exuberance within more convenient bounds. —Joan could not follow the faſhion of the world with that accuracy which depends on money—Miſs Rufford had diſguſted her with taudry attempts—ſhe therefore borrowed her ideas from grace; and correcting them by her own good ſenſe, though

though ſhe was never violently faſhionable, ſhe always pleaſed, and maintained a ſuperiority of appearance that procured her the admiration and diſtinction of all the men, and the conſequent hatred of her own ſex.

Provoked with himſelf for loſing, through timidity, the beſt opportunity he could have hoped for of beſpeaking her attention, Byram made an effort to be eloquent; but his purpoſe was not very clear, though it might be gueſſed at by his aukwardneſs, when the ladies ruſtled into the room—he curſed their intruſion, not willing to blame his own delay; and they prepared to depart.

CHAP. IV.

LAMBERT's good humour was not at all improved, by his finding it, as he might have expected, a ſettled matter that he ſhould eſcort Miſs Rufford. A little cooled in his judgment by diſappointment, he foreſaw that ſhe would oblige him to dance with her; and as the cuſtom of changing partners was not then prevalent, he ſaw neither hope nor reſource. Emergency gave him the promptitude opportunity could not afford him; and as he offered his aſſiſtance to Mrs. Rufford and Joan in getting into their chaiſe, he whiſpered a very earneſt petition, that ſhe would reſerve herſelf to dance with him;—ſhe made no reply; but in ſomewhat better hopes from having made the attempt, he joined Miſs Rufford,

Rufford, and very decently did the honors of the winds and the windows.

The diſtance was about four miles; and the forty minutes it took up, were diligently employed by Miſs Rufford to ſecure her ſubjugation of her companion, before his allegiance ſhould be put to any teſt.—She firſt affected the ſentimental, and began admiring the ſtillneſs of the evening—then a philoſophy of mind, that made her look down with contempt on the frivolous amuſement of which ſhe was going to partake; but Lambert perverſely replying to her nonſenſe, that he thought a November evening in the country dreary, and that he loved dancing, her opinions veered about; and ſhe talked of the charms of *Lunnun*, and the felicities of chearful amuſements, giving him now and then a hint that—ſtrange to tell! ſhe was, on this occaſion, unprovided with a partner, and adding, with malice not to be diſſembled, when ſhe ſaw him torpid to

the ſuggeſtion, that ſhe admired Joan's courage in going to balls, when ſhe had never been at boarding ſchool, nor learnt to dance.

"And pray, Madam," replied Lambert, determined at all riſques to torment her, "who is this fame Joan that ſeems to have ſo much myſtery attached to her ſituation? your family really make me curious to have her hiſtory—pray what is her name?"

"Why, *Joan*, Sir," anſwered Miſs Rufford, in a deep key of ſmothered paſſion—"What is it you want to know about Joan?"

Lambert was awed; and in the pauſe of his fears her paſſion mounted, and got the aſcendancy of all her art.—"You ſeem, Sir," ſaid ſhe, in all the agitation of rage, "to be much readier to take notice of the houſe dependents, than of the genteel part of the family—What, I ſuppoſe you

are

are one of the troop that come down into the country, to get into genteel families, and ſeduce the maid ſervants, and then leave them and their brats a burden on the pariſh; but, Sir, my papa is a *juſ-pece*, and a magiſtrate; and he never ſuffers ſuch things. I think it would be much unbecominger in you not to *demean* yourſelf ſo low as to pay all your reſpects to people that has not, as you may ſay, almoſt another gown to their backs, and is dependent on genteel families."

" My dear Madam," replied Lambert, with all the gentle hypocriſy of irony, " you entirely miſtake me—I aſſure you, I am not one of the genteel-families'-maid-ſervants'-ſeducing troop; nor would I do ſo *ungenteel* a thing as to leave any of my brats a burden on the pariſh.—I never *unbecome* myſelf ſo far as to *demean* myſelf to low people; but you know, my dear Madam, if thoſe whom we dare not look up to, yet cannot forbear thinking towards,

will not condeſcend to give us any encouragement, a poor young fellow's ſpirit is broken; and he can only hang himſelf, or do worſe."

So fine an oration from an orator ſo charming, entirely overſet ſweet Sarah's dainty underſtanding:—ſhe had been on the brink of crying with paſſion; and though ſhe could repreſs her tears, ſhe could not forbear ſome ſobs, while ſhe anſwered, "I am ſure, Mr. Byram, I never dreamt of being haughty—I thought you might be like Mr. Sanderſon, who came down laſt ſummer, and while I was waiting for him to do the genteel thing, and make me a handſome offer and ſettlements, &c. &c. and ſo forth ——"

From the preſent ſtate of the lady's ſpirits, Lambert now hoped ſomething more than commonly fooliſh was coming—her ſobs increaſing, he ſoothed her into utterance by a few ſugared words; and rubbing her

her eyes with the back of her broad hand, entirely forgetful of her clean white gloves, ſhe proceeded—" Why, Sir, I muſt tell you how it was, for you know when people thinks of coming together, there don't ought, as I ſay, to be any reſerves. Mr. Sanderſon was a very genteel young man, and came down among us laſt ſummer—he was a very genteel young man indeed, and travelled the country, you ſee like a rider, as they call it, but in a very genteel way; for he never carried any thing but his own little portmanteau, which I really don't think as it took more room than a lump of butter—I never ſee ſuch a little totty thing as Mr. Sanderſon's portmanteau!—O how I uſed to admire that there dear little portmanteau!"

" Well, my dear Madam," interpoſed Byram, leaving the dear little portmanteau to take care of itſelf, " let us proceed, if you pleaſe, with its owner."

"Lord a mercy!" cried Miſs, "I had no thoughts ever of proceeding againſt Mr. Sanderſon; but however, if you adviſe it, I will tell you the whole ſtory to an end—Ah! I recollect as you are in the law, and the Temple; ſo I ſuppoſe you know what is law."

The portmanteau and the law were almoſt too much; and Lambert, beſtowing a curſe on her wits, begged her to *go on* with her narrative, for had he ſaid *continue it*, he feared the phraſe might have proved too embarraſſing in its meaning.

"Well, Sir," reſumed Miſs Rufford, "Mr. Sanderſon was the only ſon and heir of a gentleman of my papa's acquaintance—I believe they had a ſeat in one of the foreign counties—I don't recollect which; but I think it was *Sow—ſow—ſouth—Southwark*—yes, I am ſure of it now—you know one can't always recollect one's *jography*—it was the county of Southwark—his friends were

were very rich—his father, he told me himſelf, had twice given his vote for a member of parliament, who came, I aſſure you, with all the *congees* and bows, to aſk it, as if old Mr. Sanderſon had been a prince; and though the parliament-man was in his carriage when he met old Mr. Sanderſon, juſt upon a very high hill in the county of Southwark, that they call St. Margaret's hill—I believe it is a hill that you ſee the ſea from—it is a beautiful place by all account,--yet do you know he would not ſpeak to old Mr. Sanderſon from his coach, but got out, and ſtood all in the dirty ſtreet, in the middle of the carts and coaches, to pay his *devors* to old Mr. Sanderſon."

"Well, but my dear Madam," ſaid Byram, "let me underſtand the ſtory clearly—I thought you ſaid Mr. Sanderſon had come down in a way that made me ſuppoſe him a rider from ſome of the wholeſale dealers in London.

 "I don't

"I don't know what you call a *wholeſale dealer*," replied Miſs; "I know that Mr. Sanderſ—"

"Pardon me, Madam," interrupted Byram, "for preſuming to inform you; but a wholeſale dealer is a man who traffics in commodities, in very large quantities; others who ſell in ſmall quantities, for the immmediate uſe of the conſumer, we call retail dealers."

"Then I am ſure, Sir," ſaid Miſs Sally, perfectly ſatisfied with her companion's endeavour to make her feel ridiculous, "Mr. Sanderſon was not with any of your wholeſale dealers; for he was a very genteel young man, and I dare ſay none of his friends would have ſuffered him to have ſtirred a finger with a large parcel; no, I am ſure his muſt have been a very genteel buſineſs. But, as I was ſaying, down he came, and my papa met with him, as he might do with you, and aſked him to the houſe,

houſe, and ſo I ſaw that very evening, what was his deſign, as you ſee I might do your's; and he ſtaid five or ſix days; and I am ſure I did every thing that was genteel and agreeable; for I ſaw what was at his tongue's end; ſo we walked out in an evening into the wood; and it uſed to be ſo pleaſant to hear the dear little innocent birds ſing, and ſee them fluttering about."

"Well, Madam," interrupted Lambert; "and did not this inviting ſituation, and your uncommon goodneſs produce a declaration on his part?"

"No, Sir," ſhe anſwered, in a tone of mortification, "when I was expecting to hear him ſay what I am ſure he meant; but only an artful huſſy came in the way; and you ſee, he had got hold of my hand; and, you ſee, I did not think it was the thing to draw it away, as we were, you ſee, as you may ſay, on a ſociable footing, one of

our wenches came to call us in to ſupper; ſhe was the forwardeſt, impudenteſt creature I ever ſet eyes on—a great broad face and cherry cheeks, and ſo clumſy—but, however, ſhe i s ruined to all intents and purpoſes; I took care of that."

"Proceed with your ſtory, Madam, if you pleaſe," ſaid Byram, who now hoped for ſomething worth attending to; "I long for the cataſtrophe."

"Why, Sir, would you believe it," reſumed the narrating fair one, "Why, you ſee, as that good-for-nothing toad, Bet, interrupted Mr. Sanderſon ſo ill-manneredly juſt when he had, I dare ſay, got up his mind to ſpeak, I thought it would not be amiſs to give him another opportunity, if he had any thing to ſay; for you know, I dare ſay, that baſhful people, *ſpecially* young men, wants ſometimes a great deal of encouragement; ſo as I was coming down ſtairs next morning—I had got up early

early to make myſelf a little decent; I juſt taps a little gentle tap at Mr. Sanderſon's door, as I might do at your's, not meaning any offence: preſently I heard Bet's voice—I am ſure it was Bet's voice, call out, O gimini! there's my miſtreſs! With that I burſt open the door—Gracious me, what's that jolt? Lord, it has quite jumbled my cap—Dear me! I dare ſay I ſhall be quite a figure—O I believe we are at Mrs. Halnaby's.—Well, Sir, Mr. Sanderſon went away directly; and Bet was turned out, as the minx deſerved, without a character."

A few words which followed this compendium of the cataſtrophe did not reach Byram's ear; for, jumping out of the vehicle, he went to aſſiſt Joan and her gouvernante in alighting. Miſs Rufford remaining in the attitude of a cat on the brink of a pond, deſirous to deſcend, but fearful of misfortune. In the mean time, Lambert had repeated his requeſt to Joan, that he might be allowed to dance with

her; and not able to obtain any anſwer, he ſaw her ſafe on the ground, and returned to Miſs Rufford, who would willingly have detained his arm till ſhe had entered the ball-room; but not chuſing to aſſume the character of her devoted knight, he kept behind; and the proceſſion entered in order; but it was to his great aſtoniſhment that he perceived Miſs Rufford now gave way to Joan, and ſuffered her to make her appearance before her.

CHAP. V.

A GENTEEL looking groupe of dancers and ſpectators were aſſembled at Mrs. Halnaby's. The lady of the houſe appeared about the middle age of life; was handſome in her perſon, and elegant in her manners. She noticed politely buſtling Mrs. Rufford, in her beſt crimſon damaſk gown and laced apron, and her ſmart daughter, who chilled in lilac luſtring trimmed with pale blue; but the welcome ſhe gave Joan was different; ſhe claſped her in her arms, and in a voice of the tendereſt affection ſhe cried out, "God bleſs you, my love, I am rejoiced to ſee you; I was fearful you could not be here, for I heard you had a cold. Look! Mrs. Henſedge," ſaid ſhe to a crooked little woman who was ſtanding near her, "look how like her

dear

dear mother ſhe grows—you knew her mother.—Reſemble her, my love, in all but her misfortunes, and I ſhall love you for your own ſake and for her's." Joan curtſied, and, with gliſtening eyes, not unobſerved by Lambert, who waited for an introduction, ſhe kiſſed the hand Mrs. Halnaby held her's with. Several young people now came forward with familiar ſalutations and evident joy to meet Joan, who not forgetting in her flattering reception the right of a ſtranger, ſaid in a low voice to Mrs. Halnaby, "I fancy *my ladies* forget to introduce their viſitor to you; it is Mr. Byram, Sir Clifford Byram's ſon: he is going down to his father at Bath. Mr. Rufford met him yeſterday at Reading, and he has been at our houſe ever ſince."

Mrs. Halnaby's good breeding relieved Lambert from an aukward ſituation: ſhe came forward to him, and recognized him as the ſon of a family ſhe had formerly known

known in a distant part of the kingdom. The encouragement of her countenance and deportment, excited a hope in him that he might, in the course of the evening, get some information from her about *Joan*, whose name he had not yet heard; but his curiosity was sooner gratified than he expected; for a trio of ladies coming in, Mrs. Halnaby, who retained her near her, introduced her to them by the astonishing stile and title of *the honourable Miss Doveridge*, making her still better known, by adding "*my Joanna* of whom you have so often heard me speak."

Lambert could not decide whether this alteration in the sphere Joan seemed to move in, affected most his hopes or his fears. Joined to the reserve of her behaviour, he dreaded whatever might give her an advantage; yet he could not but see that any superiority must render her more acceptable to his family; but in the absurdity of judgment guided by passion,

no

no one circumſtance occupied him ſo fully, as the conduct of the Ruffords in that one particular of vulgariſing Miſs Doveridge's Chriſtian name, into that of *Joan*—Joanna was pretty and uncommon; but *Joan*—O *Joan* was deteſtable. That ſuch ignorant narrow-minded ſouls as the Ruffords ſhould have the dominion over a being ſo nearly of the angelic kind, had reaſonably enraged him; but that they ſhould degrade her name to that of *Joan* was too much for human patience to bear. Why the human mind loves trifles is an inexplicable enigma; but it ſeems to delight in reſting on them ever to the aggravation of acute ſuffering, or we ſhould not ſee, as we do every day, nymphs who have experienced the perfidy of their lovers, moſt wounded at their ſlighting them *in public*. Miſſes on the verge of marriage, when diſappointed by their own coquetry, moſt hurt by the neceſſity of returning to all the gewgaws of courtſhip; wives, whoſe huſbands have plagued them into miſery

by attempts to get rich, moſt grieved because little Miſs muſt leave off her dancing, or ſick people moſt uneaſy because they cannot have their chamber unneceſſarily ſcoured.

About forty perſons as miſcellaneous as in a deſcent from the ark, were now aſſembled; the ball-room was opened, and two fiddles, with a tabor and pipe, ſet the heads of the old ladies, and the heels of the young ones in motion. Lambert opened a way for himſelf into a groupe that ſurrounded Miſs Doveridge, and again aſked the favour of her hand.

Mrs. Halnaby at that moment coming up and hearing his requeſt, ſaid, "Nay, my Joanna, do not engage yourſelf: Charles will, I hope, be here preſently, and you know he will expect you to dance with him." "I ſhould be ſorry to diſoblige you or Mr. Halnaby," replied Joanna, turning from Lambert and whiſpering

pering her friend; "but really he has treated me lately with ſuch coolneſs, that I think he will feel obliged to me for diſpoſing of myſelf." "Do as you pleaſe, my love," anſwered Mrs. Halnaby, "in this inſtance, but ſuſpend your opinion of his conduct in all others. I can ſay nothing for him, but that I wiſh he was wiſer.—Dance with Mr. Byram, my dear, if you pleaſe."

The faſhion of the time made minuets a prelude to the more lively meaſures. Lambert felt elated and diſpoſed to exert himſelf when he found it was his lot to ſet the example with Joanna. She acquitted herſelf in a manner that increaſed at once his admiration of her, and his contempt for Miſs Rufford's malevolent detraction; but his ideas were ſoon diſturbed by Joanna's whiſpering to him as he quitted her hands, a requeſt that he would take Miſs Rufford out. Happy to ſhew his devotion in any way, however humiliating,

ating, he approached the ſpinſter, whoſe air, which had been before vulgar and ridiculous, increaſed to complete folly as he approached her. When handed in all the formality of minuet-dancing to the ſtarting place, her head nodded, her eyes reeled to catch obſervation, her crippled elbows bent to the muſic, and propped on heels that erected her on tip-toe, ſhe ſidled and ſhuffled through the figure, with the eaſe of a fettered aſs, and the accuracy of an extempore genius. It was ſo difficult to conform to her movements, and ſo impoſſible to gueſs where ſhe was to be found, that her partner thought only of a decent retreat; but Miſs was determined to make the moſt of an opportunity that perhaps was rare, and ſhe croſſed and croſſed till Byram, out of all patience, led the way to a concluſion, and abruptly quitting her, retired to a ſeat amidſt the confounding titter of all the girls.

As

As ſoon as he had a little recovered the ſenſe of his mortification, he made up to Mrs. Halnaby to apologiſe; but the clamour for country dances had begun, and all was forgotten in the proſpect before him.—What then were his feelings when going acroſs the room to ſeek Joanna, he met her coming to take her place at the top of the ſet, led by a very genteel young man whom he had not before ſeen? At the ſame time, Miſs Rufford was friſking as if with the ſame intention, but unprovided with a partner. Provoked and puzzled, Lambert was going to ſeek an explanation by taking Miſs Doveridge's vacant hand, but ſhe withdrew it with a ſmile, ſaying, "I underſtand you are engaged to Miſs Rufford, ſo I have diſpoſed of myſelf." Lambert looked down towards the fiend that haunted his ſteps, who had now paſſed them, and he perceived her tucked up in jigging guiſe, ſtanding in the rank, and marking the time of the country dance tune moſt *forcibly*, if not very

very *correctly*, with her head, her hands, and her feet. He ſaw now that ſhe conſidered him as her right, and had given out that he was engaged to her; but the young ladies of the party had quitted the line to form themſelves again into tittering groups, and expectation ſeemed ſo to hang on what he ſhould do, that he could not ſtand it long: in thorough ill humour he retreated, half reſolved to quit the company and the country, and inſtantly to purſue his journey to Bath; but this would have been to abandon entirely all his hopes, and he heſitated.

In the mean time the dancing began, and poor Miſs Rufford having been *danced by*, and often requeſted to move, not being able to catch the eye of Byram, quitted the field of action with diſdain, and followed him into the adjoining room, calling out, "So, Sir, you won't dance! Well, upon my word, I think"—"Excuſe me, Madam," replied Lambert, deſirous

ſirous at any rate to ſtop her tongue, "I am not in a humour to be talked to."—"Well but, Sir, I thought you and I were to have gone down the dance together—I told you I was not engaged; and here have I kept myſelf."—"Pray, Madam," ſaid Byram, taking up a candle to look at a picture, "excuſe me—I very ſeldom dance—I am not fond of it."——"Perhaps," ſaid Miſs, "you like a little chit-chat better—let me ſhut the door, for them there fiddles make ſuch a noiſe."

Byram would take no notice of ſuch impertinence, but continued looking at the pictures; and his tormentor, who ſeemed diſpoſed to woo him in any way, rather than to loſe him, began to give him what information her knowledge of the pictures furniſhed her with.—"That landſcape," ſaid ſhe, "is a—a—a Hebe—yes, they call it a Hebe—but I don't know why—it was done by a former old *anceſter* of Mrs. Halnaby's—a lady who painted very fine —ſhe

—ſhe was learnt to paint either by Achilles or Sir Joſhua Reynolds, I dont know which—that there is a Poll Varniſh—I believe it is called ſo from the name of the gentlewoman that painted it—and that other is the ſtory of a poor gentleman, a Mr. Acton, I think, that was killed by his own hounds.—They ſay Diana ſomebody, I never heard her name, ſet them on to do it, which I think was very ſhameful."

Even Lambert's ill humour could not ſtand ſuch a counterpoiſon as it met with in Miſs Rufford's Ciceronian abilities—his anger changed to contempt and merriment; and he was going to ſhew her how ſincerely he deſpiſed her, when Mrs. Halnaby entering the room in haſte, cried out, "So you two neither chuſe to dance, nor to be ſpectators of the dancing!—I muſt not allow this.—Mr. Byram, you would oblige me much, if you would go down a couple of dances with a lady that cannot get a partner." Glad at any rate

to

to convince Miſs Rufford that her power was not abſolute, and ſuppoſing nothing could be worſe than herſelf, he ſet down the candle and left the neglected fair one in dudgeon. In the door-way Mrs. Halnaby ſtopped, and ſaid, "I beg your pardon,—it is no agreeable partner I have found for you; but it is a lady I am obliged to, and fear to affront." "I ſhall be happy to obey you, Madam," replied Byram, if you will reward me by a quarter of an hour's converſation before I quit your houſe." "I fear it will hardly be in my power," Mrs. Halnaby replied, "this evening; but I will remember your requeſt, and make an opportunity if I can."

He was introduced to his new partner, and his eyes convinced him, that if there was nothing in the creation more wearifome than Miſs Rufford, there might be ſomething more hideous; for this new object of his attention bore a nearer reſemblance

reſemblance to the Chimæra than to any thing human.—It was Mrs. Henſedge, over whom his pre-occupied eye had but ſlightly glanced, as Mrs. Halnaby ſpoke to her in introducing Joanna—ſhe was about forty years of age, but might, had ſhe kept her own counſel, have paſſed for ſeventy—her figure was contracted into innumerable writhings of deformity—her large lifeleſs eyes warred with each other and with every object that oppoſed itſelf to them, while all the diſproportion poſſible, raged in the lower features of her face.—A perſon ſo unfortunate, might have excited pity, which a well tempered mind might have converted into reſpect; but Mrs. Henſedge could not be contented with what ſhe might have gained—ſhe dreſſed prepoſterouſly, and, as often as it was in her power, exhibited in public the airs and graces ſhe *traveſtied* from the young and the beautiful. Her favourable opinion of herſelf had been recently confirmed by the influence of her money on the ſlender

hopes of Mr. Henſedge, who in the want of caſh and the proſpect of affluence, was blind to the alloy of the golden ſhower, and had compleated her triumph by marrying her.

Recovering from the chill he had felt on firſt approaching her, Lambert took his place with his jocund partner at the bottom of the dance, and had leiſure for ſome minutes to indulge his ſpleen, in beſtowing a few hearty good wiſhes on the ball and its attendants, and on his own folly in delaying his journey. But his fair partner did not long ſuffer him to indulge in gloomy reverie—her tongue was of the alarum claſs; and he heard from her abundance of obſervations on others, not deficient in ſhrewdneſs or ill-nature, but all reverting in their tendency to her own praiſe. Diſguſted as Byram was, he however could not but ſmile, when as a prelude to their ſetting off for an exhibition he felt heartily aſhamed of, Mrs. Henſedge,

ſedge, in a tone of tender apprehenſion, beſought him to be careful in going down the dance, that he took no liberty that could offend Mr. Henſedge, whom ſhe pointed out to him, and deſcribed as being moſt terribly jealous of her. He could ſcarce forbear replying, by repeating, "Of *you*, Madam?" She added a few delicate hints that her health, and conſequently the family lineage might ſuffer, ſhould her *caro ſpoſo*'s natural jealouſy be rouſed to violence—ſhe charitably ſeemed to infer that an object, ſuch as herſelf, excuſed this weakneſs of his mind, and then ſeizing Byram's hands, and arching her eye-brows to the utmoſt limits of her forehead, ſhe floundered through the couples. Byram heard Mr. Henſedge's name and his jealouſy mentioned to every man ſhe led out or turned hands with; and the laugh went regularly down with the figure; but near the bottom Mrs. Henſedge's conceit was affronted by the inattention of one lady to her manœuvres; ſhe loudly reproved—the

lady did not chuſe to apologize—a few taunts enſued—the goddeſs perhaps ſaw ſhe was laughed at; and violently diſpleaſed, ſhe releaſed Byram, by refuſing to dance any longer.

His amuſement was now to watch Miſs Doveridge—he ſaw her, with infinite grace and ſprightlineſs performing her part—he ſaw her received by all with aſſiduous ſmiles, and all ſeemed ſenſible of the animation of her preſence, except Charles Halnaby whom ſhe danced with. This obſervation and what he had heard between Mrs. Halnaby and Joanna, abated the fears he muſt otherwiſe have indulged; but he now began to queſtion his own ability to make uſe of any opportunity for private converſation with Mrs. Halnaby, ſhould ſhe remember his requeſt and ſhew a diſpoſition to gratify it.

CHAP. VI.

But Fortune threw in Byram's way a temptation too ſudden and too ſtrong to be reſiſted: Mrs. Halnaby came up to him when the company were engaged in the next dance, and ſaid in a manner ſufficiently encouraging, that ſhe was now at leiſure for a few minutes to attend to him if he would follow her into the adjoining drawing-room; here Miſs Rufford had remained, forgotten by all; but ſhe had had the good fortune to faſcinate by her charms and her eloquence, a little curate, a ſtranger in the country; and with him ſhe was practiſing all her ogling and wriggling. To get rid of the impediment this harmonious couple muſt have proved, Mrs. Halnaby urged them to join the dance; the raven-beau ſeemed too obſe-

ſequious to articulate a negative on any occaſion, and not a little proud of the diſtinction he had met with from Miſs Rufford, whom he fancied wealthy; he ſtrutted before her, and put her into thorough good humour by remaining her partner through the evening.

With the intimidating preface, "Well, Sir, what is your pleaſure?" Mrs Halnaby rouſed Lambert from his embarraſſment—he could make neither preface nor apology, and therefore followed the far better method of ſimply telling her that he had by accident become a gueſt in Mr. Rufford's family—that he had found in it an ornament, whoſe worth ſeemed unknown to them, and who was treated by them in a way that at once excited his pity and his curioſity—that from the reception he ſaw given to Miſs Doveridge by Mrs. Halnaby, he feared he muſt, through ignorance, have incurred her diſpleaſure in the few hours they had inhabited the ſame houſe.

houſe, where he found it impoſſible to pay her common civility—he therefore only requeſted Mrs. Halnaby to unveil ſo much of the myſtery of Miſs Doveridge's ſituation, as might enable him to treat her with proper reſpect.

" And is this indeed your *only* motive?" replied Mrs. Halnaby, with an enquiring eye—" I confeſs," replied Lambert, " the contraſt Miſs Doveridge is to the other members of Mr. Rufford's family, ſets her attractions in a very forcible point of view."——" Well, my dear Sir," interrupted Mrs. Halnaby, " I will do as you deſire—I will gratify your curioſity, which is all I can indulge; for, to tell you the truth, I ſhall be mortified to the utmoſt degree, if Joanna is not, in a couple of years, the wife of my ſon—I fancy I need not ſay much to you of her merit; but as I tell you fairly what her proſpect is, and have myſelf not a world of pity for young men's ſudden love, I ſhall not think myſelf

obliged to keep you in ignorance of any other particulars—There is no myſtery attached to Miſs Doveridge's ſituation, but that, I believe, which ariſes from the foibles of thoſe ſhe is forced to obey—her ſituation is humiliating, but it is at preſent irremediable, and muſt end with her minority. She is the orphan of Lord Doveridge, the repreſentative of an ancient, but obſcure and needy family. Her father was a man of uncommon merit, though but weak underſtanding—he fell deſperately in love with the deareſt friend of my childhood: he married her, incenſed her friends, and forfeited all claim to their wealth or kindneſs, by diſappointing their more reaſonable views for her.—They lived on a very narrow income, which want of œconomy daily diminiſhed, and in a few years they both died, worn out, at an early age, with the cares of the world. —They left only this child, then about ſix years of age; and as the ſmall eſtate belonging to the family deſcended in the male line,

line, and there were claims more than equal on every ſpecies of perſonal property that had outlived the wreck of their fortune, this poor girl would have been wholly unprovided for, had not her grandfather, by her mother's ſide, been prevailed on by the entreaties of a friend to extend his bounty towards her: he left her, at his death, one thouſand pounds, which produce her forty pounds a year, an income ſcarcely adequate to her wants.

"Her father had, early in life, been acquainted with Mr. Rufford, and to his care and ſole government he bequeathed her. She never complains; but I have reaſon to believe her life, in ſuch a family, muſt be, as you ſeem to hint, extremely uncomfortable—I have ſometimes attempted to interfere, but to no purpoſe. Mr. Rufford is abſolute; and meaſuring her right to indulgence by her pecuniary expectations, he has brought her up in a way that might have rendered her a diſgrace to

her family; but Joanna can never be otherwiſe than elegant; and I therefore now ſuffer the Ruffords to go on as they pleaſe. I live in this neighbourhood ſolely for the dear girl's ſake: I have given her what little aſſiſtance I am capable of in her education, and have directed her purſuits; but, as I have told you, I deſign her for my ſon; and as, ſhould I be gratified, ſhe will in about two years be releaſed, I am not uneaſy at any deficiency of accompliſhments, which I hope then I may be able to make good; and perhaps it is, on the whole, better, by ſuffering her to ſee what life is without its gilding, to give her a due ſenſe of any bleſſing ſhe may meet with hereafter."

Mrs. Halnaby left Byram to his ruminations, as ſoon as ſhe had given him theſe brief memoirs, which ſerved only the more to incenſe him againſt the Rufford family. —As if he expected to perceive ſome alteration in Joanna's looks, now that he was acquainted

acquainted with her origin, he ſtrolled again into the dancing-room, and there, to his infinite joy, he ſaw her, not engaged in the dance, but talking to a ſmall party—he inſtantly flew to the ſpot, and, without looking at thoſe near her, aſked her, if ſhe was then diſengaged.—"Nay," ſaid a young man near her, "pray let it not be ſuppoſed we have been deficient in our chivalry, ſince Miſs Doveridge's knight deſerted her ſervice—we have all offered ourſelves; but it ſeems ſhe has half engaged herſelf to another knight, who does not chuſe to make his appearance: we therefore wait only the time allowed him to return, which is till the concluſion of this dance, and then we fight for the lady:"—"Oh," ſaid Joanna, "if you are ſo violent, I ſhall be frightened, and betake myſelf to a more peaceful ſituation.—Mr. Byram," continued ſhe, addreſſing herſelf with great frankneſs to him,—"I believe I have been very rude; but I was led into

an error—till you releaſe me, I think myſelf engaged to you for the next dance."

Lambert, ſcarcely crediting his own good fortune, felt grateful for her politeneſs; and while they waited to take their places, he had the firſt opportunity of converſing with her.

Diſtreſſed as he was for time to introduce himſelf to her regard, and ſurrounded on all ſides as he ſaw her with obſtacles to his wiſhes, reſulting equally from the ill qualities of the Ruffords, and the friendſhip of Mrs. Halnaby, he was again driven to be explicit; and at the firſt favourable moment he ſimply repreſented to her how deep an impreſſion the uncommon merit of her character, and her unaffected lovelineſs, had made on his mind and its affections; but Joanna's reception of his overtures gave no encouragement to clandeſtine love: ſhe ſeemed perfectly aware, that there is a language every man, who wiſhes

wiſhes for a good opinion of himſelf, talks to every pretty woman: ſhe diſclaimed all compliments, as founded in ignorance of her character; and ſhe appeared to have been put on her guard, by experience againſt deluſive profeſſions. When Byram would have juſtified his attempting thus privately to gain her favour, by adverting to the conduct he had witneſſed in the Rufford family, ſhe ſtopt him by declaring her obligations to them to be thoſe of gratitude and juſtice—"I was an orphan," ſaid ſhe, "and expoſed to almoſt all the dangers of life, when Mr. Rufford received me into his houſe—I have ſeen many, in a ſituation ſuperior to mine, ruined for want of the protection I have experienced—if I have not been happy, I have been ſecure; and for that let me be thankful."

There was a tone which accompanied theſe words—there was a ſentiment in her eyes—there was a look of acknowledgment addreſſed

addreſſed to heaven, which gave Lambert a ſuſpicion that misfortune had been the ſchool in which this amiable girl had thus early refined her prudence. He dared not hint what he feared muſt wound her; but with all the little energy he could expreſs, unnoticed by others, and which forced concealment rendered ſtill ſtronger, he urged his novel paſſion—it was, however, to no purpoſe: Joanna coloured and joined Miſs Rufford, who was now too much elated by the *doux yeux*, and the conſoling doctrines of the little peering curate, to beſtow a word upon one, who had broken from her net, and contemned her blandiſhments.

Lambert had only to wiſh for the revolution of ſituation the ſupper might procure for him; but his ill fortune purſued him through the evening; for Mrs. Rufford, who had experienced nearly an equal portion of vexations at the quadrille table, could not be prevailed on to ſtay ſupper; and

and it became neceſſary for Lambert to offer to eſcort her home.—He thought he ſaw, in the countenance of Miſs Doveridge, when ſhe, with more aſſiduity than the good lady merited from her, aſſiſted in fencing her perſon and her beſt apron from injury, a look of ſympathetic regret for the tax laid on his politeneſs; but it was gone when he took leave of her; and he was convinced he had, like a coxcomb, fed his vanity at the expence of his judgment.

CHAP. VII.

THE ancient matron could not be charged with adding to Lambert's irritations, unleſs his nerves were too weak to bear the regular gentle ſnore with which ſhe beguiled the way home. Her ſoporific genius ſeemed admirably to apportion his doſe; for ſhe waked inſtinctively when the chaiſe entered the village of Milham-parva; and by the emphatical exclamation Lack-a-day! ſhe, at the ſame moment, rouſed her companion from the more profound reverie into which the privation of all hope had plunged him.—He recovered his recollection on entering the houſe, ſufficiently to order the chaiſe to be again at the door by day-break the next morning; and then hearing Mr. Rufford was ſtill up, he followed the ſtaggering lady into the parlour

parlour—The ſound of her huſband's voice ſeemed the trumpet to her faculties; and, without ſuffering the interpoſition of a word, ſhe gave a very accurate drawling account of the diſaſters that had, as it appeared, moſt woefully fleeced her purſe—but Mr. Rufford's little tiff of punch was nearly out; and as he did not clearly comprehend, he could not duly pity the ſorrows his wife detailed:—ſhe ſoon therefore withdrew, either too ſleepy or too angry to recollect, that neither Lambert nor herſelf had yet ſupped.—From what was preſently audible, it was, however, to be hoped, it had not entirely eſcaped her memory; though Byram, who courted nothing ſo much as ſolitude, wiſhed to avoid Mr. Rufford's interrogations on the ſubject, and made a motion to take his final leave and retire; but the old gentleman, ſtill awake to Sally's intereſts, was more vigilant, and detained him, not only to a ſecond ſupper, but a ſecond libation to *the occidental deities* at which Mrs. Rufford condeſcended to aſſiſt

assist with resumed good humour—the old gentleman was at the zenith of eloquence, his lady in what Shakespeare calls "excellent fooling," when the younger part of the family returned from the ball, and Miss Rufford's elevated voice declared her to be in no placid mood.

The honourable Miss Doveridge, (now sunk again into humble Joan,) followed the indignant spinster into the parlour, and shewed by her countenance, that she had fully paid for all the pleasures of the evening. Miss Rufford made no other alteration in her deportment than to include Lambert in the circle of her fury—she had vented part of her ill humour on Joanna, for the unpardonable crime of having attracted attention, and left her to take care of herself; and nearly the same vindictive terms she used to Lambert, calling on her father to resent the neglect she had experienced, when Mr. Byram had not even asked her to dance; and concluding all with

with a declaration that he was ten times worſe than Mr. Sanderſon. To keep the little footing he had in the houſe, Byram ſaw it was prudent to endeavour, at leaſt, apologizing for his conduct; but Mrs. Rufford declared ſhe thought Sally had been very ill treated. Mr. Rufford began to talk importantly with oblique hints at Joanna, whom his daughter drove before her, and quitted the room in a fury. Lambert then took ſome pains to rouſe his hoſt's pride againſt an interference in ſo trifling a diſpute—a few ſmooth words blinded his judgment—perhaps it was influenced by the recollection that in Byram's family there were ſome valuable advowſons. Be it as it may, at parting, Mr. Rufford ſhook Lambert very cordially by the hand, and expreſſed his earneſt wiſh that he might find his worthy father recovered, and that he would never travel that road without remembering the poor vicar of Milham-parva.

The

The dejecting events of the evening rendering his night ſleepleſs—he ſaw none of the family when he came down the next morning; but had a meſſage from Miſs Doveridge, requeſting that he would take his breakfaſt before he ſet out. In the hope of ſeeing her, he conſented to the delay; but ſhe ſhunned him—he ſaw the traces of her care in the little apparatus ſent for his *dejeuné*, but a glimpſe of her was not to be procured; and he ſet forward for Bath, inclined to repent his having quitted his road to viſit the poor vicar of Milham-parva.

On reaching Bath he found his father out of all danger, and diſpoſed to think well of the filial attention which had urged him to undertake the journey. The expreſſion of Lambert's countenance obtained him ſtill farther credit for ſympathy; and he had now leiſure to ruminate on the paſt, or contrive for the future.

Not

Not being able to diſmiſs Joanna from his thoughts; and flattering himſelf he hazarded little of his father's regard, ſhould he be diſcovered to have formed ſuch an attachment, or ſhould he diſpleaſe Mr. Rufford, he reſolved to riſk the ſucceſs of a letter to Miſs Doveridge herſelf; and to this meaſure the natural ſpirit of oppoſition inherent in moſt of thoſe not yet out of tutelage, ſtill further urged him, when he heard his father moſt warmly commending the beauty and various recommendations of Lady Jemima Fawley, ſiſter to the Earl of Armathwaite; whoſe want of fortune had made her ſo far forget her line of anceſtry, as to declare her preference of *rich commoners* to *poor lords*, a circumſtance which in Sir Clifford Byram's opinion opened a a fair path for the aggrandizement of his family, which could not at preſent boaſt ennobling honours.

Byram's letter to Joanna was expedited, immediately, after an oblique conference with

with his father on this unacceptable ſubject. It contained a more full repetition of what he had declared to her; and in the moſt eloquent terms he was capable of forming, he beſpoke her regard; but he ſpent ten days in fruitleſs expectation of a reply, ſtill retaining, notwithſtanding the diſſipation of Bath, and the ſmart nothingneſs of Lady Jemima Fawley, the impreſſion he had received. The ſecret of his attachment was confided to no one, and it preyed inceſſantly on his mind; till tortured beyond his patience with the ſuggeſtions of hope and the contradictions of fear, he ventured again to addreſs Miſs Doveridge; and at the expiration of another tedious week he received the following anſwer:

"I CANNOT treat with ſilent neglect ſentiments ſo flattering as thoſe Byram does me the honour to entertain of me; nor can I ſuffer him to cheriſh hopes it will never

never be in my power to realiſe. Let me aſſure you, Sir, that the unpleaſant circumſtances of my preſent ſituation cannot induce me to exchange it for any other; and that as I aſk nothing in this world but peace, I can liſten to nothing that may endanger my ſucceſs.

I am, Sir,

You moſt obliged humble ſervant,

J. D."

This ſingular reply found employment for Byram's eyes and thoughts till the following day, when in language ſtill more perſuaſive, with arguments ſtill more convincing, and with profeſſions ſtill more conciliating, he again beſought the inexorable Joanna, and in four days heard from her in theſe leſs brief terms:

"WITHOUT accuſing myſelf of pride ill becoming my humble ſituation; and unleſs I can ſubmit to think myſelf ungrateful,

I cannot

I cannot keep that ſilence which has hitherto had no effect in diſcouraging you, Sir, in a purſuit which for your own ſake as well as mine I wiſh you would deſiſt from. I will deal very ingenuouſly with you, Sir, though I am at no time much diſpoſed to confide to any one my misfortunes; but I will be frank, that you may believe me, as I really am, ſincere.

"My ſituation at Mr. Rufford's Mrs. Halnaby has told me ſhe explained to you —it is neither flattering nor at all ſuited to my wiſhes—I had almoſt ſaid it is intolerable; but in two years it muſt end—God only knows what may follow.

"I ſhould not have replied to any one of your letters, Sir, had I not conſidered you as led into an almoſt unavoidable error by what you witneſſed during your ſhort ſtay here—you certainly might, without preſumption, ſuppoſe that I would gladly on

any

any terms accept a releaſe; but it is not ſo. I have ſeen nothing of the world but its deceptions; and nothing can induce me to enter on its ſtage.

"Forgive me, Sir; I ſat down with a reſolution to ſay much; but my ſpirits fail me; and I can ſay only, that I ſincerely wiſh, however flattering your regard, that you would think no more on

Your very humble ſervant,

J. D."

Little encouragement was to be extracted from this letter; but its myſterious appearance was an additional ſtimulus to Byram's now energetic mind: he was utterly at a loſs how to proceed. The temper in which he had left the Ruffords gave him no encouragement to repeat his viſit there; yet he could not reſolve to ſet out for London, whither his ſtudies now called him, and omit the only opportunity he

might ever have of improving his acquaintance with Miſs Doveridge, the ſtyle of whoſe letters unſatisfactory as they were, yet convinced him that the family were not privy to his attempt to correſpond with her.

CHAP. VIII.

In this hopeleſs ſtate of indetermination Byram remained torpid till his father began to urge his return to town; and he began to think it his beſt meaſure; when one morning, when the weather was ſeverely cold, and the ſtreets of Bath were rendered unpleaſant by a recent fall of ſnow, he paſſed four gentlemen who had ſtopped to talk; and beyond them he ſaw, as if waiting for one of them, a very genteel looking young woman dreſſed very cloſely, but remarkably neat in her appearance. His recent love had perhaps ſharpened his jealous tenacity of female rights and prerogatives, and he looked back with a ſentiment of reproach on the groupe who could expoſe a woman to the diſagreeable neceſſity of waiting in a

public ſtreet, the end of a converſation ſhe was not permitted to join in, when on this ſecond view he recogniſed one of the party as the young man who had danced with Joanna at Mrs. Halnaby's; and almoſt in the ſame inſtant he diſcovered the young female to be his Joanna herſelf. Regardleſs of every thing but this happy opportunity, he ſprang towards her: her countenance declared a melancholy embarraſſment; but in a low voice ſhe was going to anſwer his firſt expreſſion of aſtoniſhment, when Charles Halnaby, who was the conductor ſhe was waiting for, hearing her addreſſed, broke off his converſation, and they were immediately ſo far acquainted, that Halnaby, with the cuſtomary *non-chalance* he affected, aſked him as a favour to walk home with Miſs Doveridge, that he might purſue his journey ſome other way, with the idle party he had fallen in with. Joanna looked not a little diſconcerted at this neglect—ſhe, however, mildly expreſſed her concern that ſhe could

could not find her way back to Mrs. Halnaby's without giving any one the trouble of accompanying her. Halnaby and his companions went off with a loud laugh; and Byram almoſt ſpeechleſs with ſurpriſe, indignation, and joy, turned to accoſt Miſs Doveridge.

In a tremulous and dejected tone of voice ſhe anſwered his firſt queries, by ſaying that her kind friend, Mrs. Halnaby, was come to Bath in bad health and low ſpirits, that her ſtay there was uncertain, and that her own abſence from Milham was granted for no longer a time than while Mrs. Halnaby, who ſhe ſaid would return no more to Berkſhire, ſhould remain where ſhe was. There ſeemed to be ſomething in this precipitate emigration that was a ſecret; but Lambert had not courage to be curious; nor had he ſummoned reſolution enough to mention the ſubject of his correſpondence with Joanna, when they reached her home. He accepted her ſlight invitation to ſee Mrs.

Halnaby, and left the houſe delighted with the accidental acceſs he had obtained.

Sir Clifford Byram had in his younger years entertained a paſſion for Mrs. Halnaby: Lambert therefore found it eaſy to perſuade the old gentleman to pay her a few attentions, ſuch as are the current coin of Bath, and perhaps current no where elſe. The reſult was a very commodious intimacy between the families, which gave Lambert an almoſt daily opportunity of pleading in ſecret the intereſts of his paſſion; but he ſaw he had obſtacles not to be ſurmounted, in his father's wiſh for his match with Lady Jemima Fawley, in Mrs. Halnaby's earneſt deſire to ſee her thoughtleſs ſon ſobered by a marriage with Miſs Doveridge, and above all, in the opinion and temper of Joanna herſelf, which he feared would never permit her to diſregard his father's prohibition, to thwart her valued friend, or to hazard any part of the little comfort ſhe enjoyed. His only

only hope was, that as Lady Jemima's family honours were to be accepted in lieu of fortune, his father might be induced by the preponderating merit of Joanna to accept a ſubſtitution; but Lady Jemima had fixed herſelf in the ideas of Sir Clifford; and every oblique attempt convinced Lambert that he muſt never hope for her removal.

In the reception he met with from Mrs. Halnaby, and even from Joanna herſelf, he found that alleviation of his diſtreſs, which in the end ſerved but to encreaſe it. Mrs. Halnaby was eaſy and friendly to him: Joanna ſeemed to prefer his converſation, and to value his good opinion; but whenever he attempted to turn it to his own advantage, the repulſe he met with was ſerious; and he began to apprehend ſome inviſible oppoſition; yet he ſaw no one he could be jealous of; and as Joanna, out of regard to her friend, and from the moſt humble motives, avoided all thoſe

opportunities which ſhe might have embraced of attracting obſervation, he knew not how to trace what he could not diſcover.

The conduct of Lady Jemima Fawley ſeemed calculated to worry him into his father's ſcheme: ſhe had come to Bath at this time with an invalid relation: relying on her rank, her beauty, and her faſhion, ſhe gave herſelf in her deportment and her language the utmoſt licence; ſhe was ſlightly acquainted with Mrs. Halnaby, and had introduced herſelf there, as if for the purpoſe of meeting Byram, to whom ſhe did not at all recommend herſelf by the contempt with which ſhe treated Joanna, or the point-blank attacks ſhe frequently made on himſelf. She laughed inceſſantly; and in her laughter profeſſed her deſign to be againſt Byram's heart, which at all events ſhe would conquer; and ſuch was her wearifome humour, that Byram was often compelled to leave public

lic amuſements and private companies to avoid her. But under the ſanction of his father's partiality for her, ſhe aſſumed the right of free acceſs to his houſe, talked of herſelf as his daughter-in-law, and drove Byram to think ſeriouſly of quitting, at once, his hopes and his fears.

At this time her brother, Lord Armathwaite, was at Bath with his ſick lady, who was, after the journey, confined to her bed; and Lambert expected daily, from the progreſs of effrontery, that a coalition of family perſecution would force him to a precipitate retreat: his Lordſhip, when his Lady was ſomewhat recovered, viſited Mrs. Halnaby; and towards him in particular, Joanna's behaviour was ſo diſtant, and ſo repelling, that Lambert began to fancy it encouraging to himſelf; he knew no cauſe for peculiar ſhyneſs to a man who ſeemed to have not an atom of gaiety in his compoſition, and who appeared to be moſt ſedulouſly attentive to the health and

comfort of a wife many years older than himſelf, who had no one recommendation, either of perſon, or temper; and whom he was almoſt ſcouted for having recently married. It was, however, obvious, that Miſs Doveridge treated him with uncommon coolneſs, that it amounted to ſomething little ſhort of *hauteur*, and that in his preſence ſhe relaxed towards Byram.

Could Byram have known what was paſſing in Joanna's tortured mind, he would have ſeen leſs to hope than even in the gloomy uncertainty of his ignorance; for he would have ſeen her indiſſolubly attached to a man, every ſentiment of her heart, and every opinion of her judgment, called her to love and reſpect, till he had unaccountably forfeited all pretenſions to her regard: and now that he was irretrievably loſt to her, and in a ſituation that called on her to be cautious, ſhe was forced to ſteel her heart againſt his power and its own ſuggeſtions, and, againſt her nature, to be cruel.

Lord Armathwaite had inherited an Iriſh title, with a patrimony, not large, but competent: he had out of it portioned three ſiſters; and was ready to do whatever might be required for the advantage of the only one, who now remained unmarried: he had been a ward of Mrs. Halnaby's huſband's, and ſchool-fellow of Charles Halnaby's, and conſequently a frequent viſitor at his mother's, where he had become acquainted with, and attached to, Miſs Doveridge. Mrs. Halnaby's very early wiſh to unite her ſon and the daughter of one of her firſt friends, had rendered it imprudent to ſuffer this youthful paſſion to appear, as the diſcovery would have cut off the only means of cultivating it; but on the part of Joanna it was returned with all the ſincerity of youth and the frankneſs of ſteady affection; and in the probability that Charles Halnaby, who had neither a head nor heart, might, by ſome previous paſſion, or by his indifference to this match, releaſe her from all

obligation, this juvenile amour was conducted with hope and ſecrecy.

The ſituation which Joanna, buoyed up by all that could give confidence to youthful inexperience, could not but look forward to, had been the motive with her to endeavour at repairing the defects of her education; and ſhe had moſt ſedulouſly applied to all thoſe branches of female knowledge, which might ſave from reproach the man ſhe was attached to. His frequent viſits at Mrs. Halnaby's, and the opportunities ſhe had of meeting him there, had kept up her ſpirits under the miſeries of her ſituation in the Rufford family; but it was now about a twelvemonth, ſince Lord Armathwaite, without having manifeſted the leaſt abatement of his regard, or giving her the ſmalleſt intimation of his deſign, had broken every engagement which his conduct had implied, by marrying a woman, who for every other recommendation of her ſex, ſubſtituted only immenſe wealth.

The

The blow had been nearly fatal to the unhappy Joanna; but the ſecreſy they had obſerved, kept the cauſe of her ill health and dejection a ſecret. Conſidering herſelf as cruelly duped, and not ſeeing a poſſibility of conſtruing Lord Armathwaite's conduct at all to his advantage, ſhe had called to her aid every ſpecies of juſtifiable reſentment ſhe could find in her nature; but ſtill ſhe loved him, and, made more vigilant by this conſciouſneſs, ſhe would not truſt herſelf to behave to him even with common complacency. Mrs. Halnaby fancied the diſtance entirely affected on his Lordſhip's part; and in this firſt renewal of her acquaintance with him as a married man, attributed to the pride of wealth what was in reality nothing more than the reſult of Joanna's reſerved conduct, and his own almoſt intolerable ſituation; which, in the ill temper and innumerable bad qualities of his wife, aggravated to the utmoſt the vexations of his mind.

This

This was Joanna's trying ſituation, when Lambert, having given his father a poſitive refuſal, in reply to a deciſive propoſal of Lady Jemima Fawley, received in return as poſitive a command to quit Bath, and return to his ſtudies in the Temple. He haughtily promiſed obedience; and in a commotion of anger and regret, he went in the evening to Mrs. Halnaby's, to ſee Joanna for the laſt time. There he found Lord Armathwaite and his volatile ſiſter, with ſeveral other perſons. Her Ladyſhip, on his entrance, ſprang forward from her chair, and, with a leap that ſhook the houſe, ſeized his arm, crying out, "Here comes *my* man—Byram," continued ſhe, ſtaring him full in the face, "only think how cruel! I have now aſked every man of my acquaintance, and almoſt all *not* of my acquaintance, if they would have me, but nobody will;—now it certainly is very hard that I ſhould go unmarried; ſo poſitively you muſt and ſhall have me; therefore,

fore, hold yourſelf in readineſs againſt I call on you; for it will not be long firſt."

Lambert, entirely out of countenance at this addreſs, which he rather thought audacious than witty, turned his eyes in ſilence to ſeek Joanna, who was at a little diſtance in converſation with Lord Armathwaite—His Lordſhip, as if his ſiſter had ſecured the attention of the company, was ſpeaking in a low voice, and with geſtures the moſt ſupplicating. Joanna ſaw Lambert look towards her: ſhe turned haſtily, and he perceived ſhe had been in tears:—Lord Armathwaite, with affected intereſt, enquired the cauſe of his ſiſter's gaiety, and hearing it from her own lips, gently reproved it; but all that had been diſagreeable, or was unaccountable, was preſently effaced from Lambert's mind; for Miſs Doveridge was indubitably more propitious to him than ever; and as if, by neceſſary conſequence, more repelling to the Earl. When ſhe heard that Byram was to quit

quit Bath the next day, ſhe ſhewed ſurpriſe and regret; and in a few haſty moments, which he ſnatched at the concluſion of his viſit to bid her farewell, he thought he diſcovered enough to encourage his ſtay; yet the conduct of Lady Jemima was ſtill more powerful: he determined to ſet out for London the next morning! but previouſly to try again the effect of a letter to Miſs Doveridge. He wrote to her before he retired to reſt, left his letter the next morning himſelf at the houſe, and ſet off on his return to London.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THE town was by this time growing gay, and in its lounging amuſements Lambert almoſt forgot that Joanna had, in the courſe of a fortnight, made him no reply—the energies of his mind were local and temporary; and in a return to his previous abode and habits, as no reminding ideas occurred to rouſe him, he ſeemed to have loſt all thoſe he had acquired in his journey. From this ſtate of oblivion, he was rouſed by an unexpected viſit from Charles Halnaby, a favour he could not account for, till near the moment of his adieu, when an intimation of deranged affairs, followed by a point blank requeſt of the loan of fifty pounds, reconciled to propriety and politeneſs this mark of attention. Lambert having no blinding

predi-

predilection in favour of the gentleman, excuſed himſelf, and when he had uſhered him out, ſat down with revived earneſtneſs again to addreſs Joanna.

The return of the poſt brought him this reply:—

" Sir,

" The diſtracted ſtate of mind I have been in for the laſt fortnight, would, I am ſure, plead my apology for any neglect, yet I am hurt at the rudeneſs I have been guilty of towards you. I am certainly not ſo deſtitute of vanity as to be inſenſible to your good opinion; but I fear the world and its diſtreſſes have laid too ſtrong hold on my heart to ſuffer me ever to return the ſentiments you have in our ſhort acquaintance manifeſted for me. At preſent, I can think of nothing but the diſtreſſes of my dear Mrs. Halnaby, and the terrible conſequences they forebode to me. Her

ſon's

ſon's diſſipations have exhauſted all his means of ſupplying them, and ſhe has already aſſiſted in extricating him, much to the injury of her fortune. He now calls for farther aids; and ſhe finds herſelf driven to the neceſſity of quitting the kingdom with him, in order, by frugality in a cheaper country, to retrieve his affairs. She wiſhes me to accompany her, and Mr. Rufford has been written to on the ſubject; but he poſitively refuſes his conſent. I am therefore to return to Milham in a few days. I have the ſatisfaction of telling you Sir Clifford continues in good health. Lady Jemima's conſtancy to you has been a little ſhaken within theſe few days, by the ſuperb retinue of a young Weſt Indian; but as he quickly left the place, ſhe again enquires after you, and projects new modes of conqueſt. She accompanies Sir Clifford every where, and makes him introduce her as his intended daughter-in-law.

" I ought

" I ought not to conceal from you, Sir, that Mrs. Halnaby is privy to your having written to me. Before ſhe underſtood from me that I could give no encouragement to addreſſes of any kind, ſhe kindly reproached me for endangering the only hope of her life, her ſon's being brought to recollection through my means. This is certainly complimenting my power at the expence of probability; but it is a reaſon with me for avoiding ſedulouſly the adding in any way to ſo excellent a woman's diſtreſſes; and I truſt it will have the ſame effect on you.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

J. D."

Byram, ſtimulated afreſh by the preſent idea of Joanna again at the mercy of the Ruffords, inſtantly on reading this letter, turned his thoughts to ſome means of acceſs to her. He would have immediately ſet out for Bath; but his father, and ſtill

more

more Lady Jemima, were obſtacles he could not contemn. He thought the chances much in favour of Mrs. Halnaby's return to her houſe, previous to her leaving England; and he meditated a haſty viſit t her, which he believed he could very decently excuſe, by offers of ſervice, and by manifeſting an intereſt in her diſtreſſes. He concluded that Joanna would remain with her to the laſt moment; and he almoſt hoped he might, by repreſentin to her, in ſtrong terms, the total indifference of Charles Halnaby towards her, the miſery of ſuch an union, and the additional ill treatment ſhe muſt expect from the Ruffords when ſhe had loſt her reſpected friend, prevail on her to quit ſo unpromiſing a ſituation. He could not imagine that his father's reſentment, ſhould he ſucceed, could laſt longer than till he was of age: he ſaw in his fancy a fair proſpect, and he reſolved to ſet out for Mrs. Halnaby's with all his arguments in his head.

He

He was ſo fortunate as to reach the houſe without encountering any one of the Rufford family, and ſeeing an old ſervant of Mrs. Halnaby's, he made ſure of his ſucceſs, and enquired only if his miſtreſs was at home. "My lady is," replied the man. "Then tell her I wiſh to ſpeak to her on particular buſineſs." The man ſoon returned with a look of reception, and Byram followed him to a ſmall parlour, where he pictured to himſelf he ſhould ſee Joanna with her friend.

It was early in the evening, but dark; and the one candle in the room burning not very brightly, Lambert blamed that for the miſtake he made on entering, when he imagined he ſaw two ladies, very different from thoſe he ſought, ſitting at a ſmall table playing piquet: but the next moment convinced him that he had met with a ſad diſappointment; for, in a hoarſe crabbed voice, he was addreſſed by the lady, who ſat with her face towards him,

nim, in the encouraging terms—" Well, young man, what do you want? What, I ſuppoſe, you are come after my butler's place; but, I aſſure you, I will have no extravagant, dreſſy fops in my houſe. I have got one that is extravagant enough already; he and his troop——" A deep yawn from the lady, whoſe back was towards the door, had been the only note ſhe had added to the harmony till now, when ſhe attempted to ſpeak, but was ſtopt by the authoritative tone of her ſuperior, whoſe figure Lambert now ſurveyed, and perceived her to be a very decrepid ancient dame, ſupported by pillows, her feet wrapped in flannels, and laid on the ſopha ſhe ſat on. Diſeaſe and ferocity were in her looks; and while ſhe ſcouled and grumbled, Lambert, not at all diſpoſed to relieve his curioſity by a queſtion, made towards the door. His hand was on the lock, when ſomebody ran furiouſly towards it on the outſide, and it was burſt open by Lady Jemima Fawley, who ſeized

on

on Byram, and, with her uſual exclamations, dragged him to the light. The old lady was beginning to rave, when her ladyſhip ſtrove to ſilence her, by introducing Byram as her intended huſband. "Well," replied the ſcold, "if it is any body likely to rid me of you, ſo much the better:—you may aſk him to ſit down." She then returned to her game, while Lady Jemima drew Lambert to a ſopha, ſat down cloſe by him, and keeping faſt hold on him, as if fearful of his intention, ſhe tried to engage him in converſation; but ſuch a ſituation was not to be endured. While ſhe rattled, with a purpoſe much deeper than was conſiſtent with *gaieté de coeur*, the old lady growled at the whole party, and her obſequious partner leered round to take a ſurvey of Lambert. He therefore, without ceremony, broke away, and ruſhed out of the houſe, directing his chaiſe to Reading, where he meant to paſs the night. There he learnt that Mrs. Halnaby had let her houſe for the enſuing year

to

to Lord Armathwaite, and that the lady he had been introduced to was the Countess. He could hear nothing positive of Miss Doveridge; but it was supposed she was at the vicarage. Unwilling to quit the country without seeing her, he the next morning wrote a civil intimation to Mr. Rufford that he was in the neighbourhood, and would dine with him. He scarcely knew what answer to expect; but when he recollected who governed the family, and how heinously he had offended that superior power, he could not but augur ill. However, after a tedious expectation of the return of his messenger, he received, from the fair hand, and in the elegant language of Miss Rufford, this comforting billet:——

"DEAR SIR,

"THIS is to lett you know, as we are all extream obliged to you for your polite letter, and that my papa having got the gout in his hand, we shall all be very glad to see you, as he cannot

right himſelf. We all hope all old ſtorys will be forgott, and hope you will take a bed at our houſe, as we all know whoſe contrivance they were and the days are ſo ſhort.

" Your ſervant to command,

" SARAH RUFFORD."

It might be extracted, from the complex ſtyle of this letter, that the family at the vicarage would not ſhut their door againſt Byram.

This was ſufficient for him; and with hopes that more than counterbalanced the diſguſt he felt at every recollection of the family character, he found himſelf ſeated cloſe to a good fire, and the vicar's flannel hand—The two ladies made their *entrée* in due time; and his reception had all the attributes of a welcome, but Joan did not appear, and though from the anſwer to the enquiry he made after her, he conjectured that ſhe was in the houſe, dinner paſſed without her; and he feared ſhe was now totally excluded.

CHAP. X.

THE wine was juſt ſet on the table, and Miſs Rufford was in the zenith of her airs, when a ſervant entered and pronounced Lord Armathwaite's compliments to the family, and would be very happy if they could do him the favour to ſpend the evening with Lady Armathwaite—his particular compliments to Mr. Byram and Miſs Doveridge, and hoped they would be of the party. The joyful ſound of title had tickled the ears and twirled the prominent eyes of Miſs Rufford, but the laſt words ſobered her; and repeating *Mr. Byram and Miſs Doveridge indeed!* ſhe remained, contrary to her uſual cuſtom, when orders were to be iſſued, ſilent. Her father appealed to her—Mrs. Rufford drawled out, "Aye, aye, let us go, may be we ſhall

have a comfortable pool with the old lady." Miſs ſeemed to heſitate only about Joan—whether ſhe ſhould go, or be left behind—The ſervant whether ſo directed, or prompted by ſome intereſt for Joan, added, if Miſs Doveridge could not come, it was to be put off *till* ſhe could.—At this provoking inſtance of attention, Miſs Rufford loſt all patience, and was running out into exclamation, inſtead of returning an anſwer, when her father ſoothed her with "Nay Sally, it is never ſafe to offend a Lord:" and an anſwer of acquieſcence was ſent back. Then began all the buſtle of conſideration on the grand ſubject of habiliments fit for a lordly viſit—"I muſt have my hair dreſt," cries Miſs—"My beſt apron is unluckily in the waſh," cries Mamma--"Let my beſt caſſock be looked out," interpoſes the vicar—"I wiſh I had bought that cap I cheapened at Reading laſt week," replies Miſs, with her hand againſt her cheek in deep meditation. All was now vexation and hurry—

the

the meſſage like a bomb-ſhell had diſperſed the party, who went in queſt of apron, caſſock, and tawdry make-ſhifts — No one thought of poor Joan, excepting Lambert, who was at this juncture in a predicament that ſhe alone could relieve him from: he had no attractive to Lord Armathwaite's; nay every thing repelled him from the houſe, if ſhe were not of the party: he had not yet mentioned his having called there in his way; but now to provide againſt all emergencies, as ſoon as he had a hearer, he reported the attempt he had made to return Charles Halnaby's call on him in town, concealing, however, the intereſted purpoſe with which that civility had been paid him. Mr. Rufford having regained his tranquility, ſeemed happy in an opportunity of gratifying his gouty ſpleen by a relation of Mrs. Halnaby's domeſtic diſtreſſes: as his hopes from her liberality were at an end, he ſeemed not a little elated by the ſubſtitution of the titled family, and talked with infinite

complacency and chriſtian favour, of the pains he had taken to accommodate a ſermon, which, five and twenty years before, he had preached to his own ſatisfaction, to the grand occaſion of the old Counteſs's making her firſt appearance at Milham church; and how grievouſly he had been diſappointed by her infirmities.

At length all matters were arranged for the viſit, and Lambert, who to the aſtoniſhment of Miſs Rufford, made no alteration in his dreſs, nor any apology for it, was forced to riſque the chance of Joan's being of the number of viſitants.—Lord Armathwaite ſent his coach for the party. It was announced: Mr. Rufford was all in a buſtle becauſe his family had again diſperſed, and were not ready to depart when the carriage came: he ſent the ſervants his beſt brandy-bottle: he remonſtrated; nay, he almoſt ſcolded his dear Sally for being ſo rude as to make a nobleman's carriage wait: he could

could ſcarcely refrain, even before Byram, from declaring how much he feared he might loſe by this negligence of politeneſs—his wife, whom nothing could haſten, ſauntered into the room—he enquired for Sally—he heard that, diſſatisfied with her ornaments, ſhe had attempted to give them a new arrangement, that the attempt had demoliſhed her hair-dreſſing, and by a ſhower of powder had rendered her beſt gown unfit to appear in, without much diſcipline—"Where is Joan?" aſked the old gentleman, to the no ſmall comfort of Lambert—She is helping my *daghter*, anſwered Mrs. Rufford; and you know ſhe can't begin to get herſelf ready till ſhe has done with the powder, becauſe ſhe would fancy it muſt ſpoil her hair—Mr. Rufford, in a rage clambered up ſtairs to haſten his daughter, muttering all the way *coach—lord—lord—coach*, till he reached Miſs Rufford's apartment, the door of which he bounced open, and then began the ſtrife of poſitiveneſs and

inſolence; the young lady, under ſuch heinous provocation, not ſcrupling to make uſe of the firſt expreſſions that tipped her fluent tongue. The matter went to ſuch length that Lambert, who in the parlour heard every word, thought the chances were againſt Miſs Rufford's being allowed to ride in the coronetted coach; and he feared Joan would be doomed to ſtay and ſhare her ill humour; but the old gentleman's doting fondneſs was triumphant—he coaxed her to diſpatch, and now exerted his ſtronger voice againſt Joan, whom he ordered to attend, without waſting any more time on her own dreſs: her ſupplicating tones were juſt audible, while ſhe begged ſhe might be permitted to remain at home; but this with taunting ſarcaſm on the expreſs invitation ſent her, was refuſed, and in about another quarter of an hour, ſhe followed the immenſely fine Miſs Rufford, ſhe herſelf dreſt in a manner that declared ſhe had loſt the influence of Mrs. Halnaby; for

her

her appearance was that of a common ſervant; her hair hid under a plain cap, her ſcanty gown of an ordinary ſtuff, and her apron of thick cloth.

It was impoſſible, even for the moſt broken ſpirit, to be inſenſible to ſo great a degree of humiliation; and ſhe entered with the tears gliſtening on her cheeks: ſhe had heard from the ſervants of Mr. Byram's arrival; and her countenance betrayed a confuſion, he would fain have conſtrued to his own advantage, but when ſhe had returned his civilities, her eyes appealed again to her ſordid gown, and he felt for her mortification. He wiſhed he could have deviſed ſome hint connected with Mr. Rufford's intereſt, for none elſe he knew would avail to induce him to wait the few minutes he had in his former viſit learnt poor Joan required for her change of dreſs, but none ſuggeſted itſelf:—he therefore tried only to give her courage; but her ſpirits

had many burdens on them far more weighty than this, and ſhe was to a pitiable degree dejected, when they reached the abdicated manſion of her unhappy friend, during the ſhort journey to which, a ſquabble between Mr. Rufford and Sally had beguiled the gloom and the diſtance.

It was to relieve the infirm Counteſs from the horrors of ſolitude, and perhaps her huſband from thoſe of her tongue, that the aid of the parſon's family was recurred to; ſhe had, in the morning, quarrelled with and diſmiſſed her dependant female. Lady Jemima having partly involved herſelf in the cenſure, had retired to her own apartment. It was therefore to her ladyſhip and her retreating woman that Miſs Rufford, who now without any ſcruple of punctilio led the van, exhibited the taſte and aſſiduity of her dreſs. She had prepared a pretty little elegant exordium to beſpeak the Counteſs's favour, and was chattering it, while

while her mother ſtood behind her, fluttering her fan, and curtſying inceſſantly, till ſhe could get near enough to the Counteſs's ſeat to introduce herſelf; but poor Miſs Rufford had not been previouſly informed, that the old lady was very deaf. She ſat with her chin on her boſom, rolling her eyes to *ken* the objects, unawares that any one was ſpeaking; but perhaps hearing the murmur of Miſs Rufford's concluſion, ſhe looked up at her, and replied in the gruffeſt voice poſſible—" Well child, I dont know who you are; but what did you make yourſelf ſuch a merry-Andrew for?"--Choking with vexation and craning up her neck, as if to toſs off the rebuke, Miſs Rufford retired, while her mamma, who did not chuſe to expoſe herſelf to the ſame ſort of Spartan compliment, only curtſied lower, and ſimpered more obſequiouſly—"Very well; I ſee you all," ſaid Lady Armathwaite, " ſit down till I have had my tea."

But Mr. Rufford was not to be repelled by any of theſe diſcouragements—he ſtrode up; and aware that nothing leſs than a trumpet would ſtrike the relaxed auditory nerves of the decrepid dame, he with Stentorian lungs, bellowed out a pious wiſh extracted from the concluſion of one of his beſt ſermons on the death of the righteous—the words *happy exit*, and *happineſs hereafter*, reached the Counteſs's comprehenſion: the probability of death was a ſubject no one ever dared to advert to in her preſence; for the mention of it always rendered her furious; and ſhe now, ſculing with infinite malignity on the preacher, who ſtood before her, bent down to a level with herſelf, and reſting his gouty hand on her little table, and the other on his tottering knee, muttered refractory animadverſions. "What?" ſaid ſhe, giving him a ſmart blow acroſs his inflated knuckles, with her ear-trumpet, "I ſuppoſe you are one of thoſe my Lord brings here to torment me to death with

with low ſpirits! What! you imagine I dare ſay that I muſt be threeſcore, but its no ſuch thing I tell you—I am but juſt turned forty; and the doctors tell me that if I once get rid of this weakneſs, I have youth on my ſide, and ſhall do very well again. It was only brought on by my Lord's making me travel in the winter. So pray let me hear no more of your fine canting about another world, that I dare ſay you know nothing about; but eat your pudding, Mr. Parſon, and hold your tongue"--It required rather more zeal, and a little more philoſophy than Mr. Rufford poſſeſſed, to bear this taunting repulſe of his pious endeavours—he, good man! could not underſtand that the beſt things may be rendered abſurd by being miſplaced; and in dudgeon, which the throbbing of his hand increaſed, he hobbled to a chair.

In the midſt of this buſtle of preſentation, Lord Armathwaite had entered, and

and having addreſſed the only two of the party who ſeemed to retain their wits, he ſpoke for a few moments aſide to Joanna, and then preſented to her his wife's regard. Byram watched her reception: he ſaw her not confuſed, but agitated extremely; for which he who knew no deepe cauſe, found ſufficient reaſon in her ſordid dreſs; and he feared ſhe would retire in tears from the ſharp malignity of the Counteſs; but her ladyſhip's ill qualities defeated the cruelty of Joanna's guardians: ſhe raiſed her eyes, and almoſt ſmiled, while ſhe fixed them on her intereſting countenance, ſaying in a mild voice, "Well, my pretty girl, and who are you? why I have not ſeen any thing ſo modeſt, ſo neat and ſo pretty this many a day"—Lord Armathwaite now interpoſed by naming her as Miſs Doveridge, and repeating ſo much of her pedigree as ſerved to place her within the pale of nobility —"Aye, aye," replied the counteſs; "I knew ſhe muſt be ſomething above the common

common rank—ſee there," ſhe added, pointing with her finger to Miſs Rufford, "look at that tawdry maux, and ſee how much better this child looks—Why I hear, my dear, from the apothecary here, that your friends, though people of quality, had not it in their power to provide for you—Well, never mind; be a good girl, and you will never want friends; for I hear an excellent character of you, and that you are not treated as you deſerve—Would you like to come and live with me, child?—I have juſt turned off my companion for being ſaucy; and I think you would do very well—turn round and let me look at you—I would have you always dreſt neat, but not quite ſo mean, poor folks ſhould never be fine indeed—Ha! child, what do you ſay to it?—I'll give you twenty pounds a year, and your board and waſhing—you'll have nothing to do but to ſit with me, and read aloud, and dreſs my foot that I hurt a year ago, and rub this poor

arm

arm of mine; for I have no feeling in it yet.—"

"No indeed, my lady," interupted Miſs Rufford loudly, and perhaps not diſpleaſed with an opportunity of revenge, "we can't think of parting with Miſs Doveridge—we are all ſo fond of her."

"*Fond* of her! indeed!" returned the Counteſs ſhortly—"why I am told you treat her worſe than any dog--what I ſuppoſe you muſt keep another ſervant if you parted from her.?"

"I dont know, your ladyſhip, as Miſs Doveridge has any thing to complain of," replied Miſs.

"Why, who but your ſordid ſelves," ſaid her ladyſhip "would have ſuffered the child to have come to ſee me no better dreſt—is this the way you keep her in? —I ſuppoſe ſhe muſt wear what you

pleaſe

pleaſe to buy—I cannot imagine ſhe likes it—young people generally wiſh to ſet themſelves off to the beſt advantage,—you, have made yourſelves fine; an dyou, Miſs, are as tawdry as need be, for which let me tell you I do not like you the better—what did you bring the child in a ſtuff gown for?—what buſineſs has ſhe at any rate with a ſtuff gown?—if ſhe has no money to buy a better, are ye all ſo ſtingy you could not give her one?—Come, my dear", continued the old lady, addreſſing herſelf again to the trembling Joanna, "do not bluſh at the folly of your guardians—you will be out of their power one day or other, and till then I will be your friend—Will you come and live with me—ha?"

"I believe," anſwered Joanna modeſtly, "I have no right to leave Mr. Rufford's family—my father's will obliges me to ſtay there; and I have nothing to complain of, but I am very much obliged to your ladyſhip."

"Well,

"Well, there's a good girl" anſwered the Counteſs—"And now," added ſhe, "order the coach again, and let it take you all away: for as to the parſon and his conceited daughter I have heard and ſeen enough of them."

Conſternation and rage ſat on the features of the trio—Joanna looked diſtreſſed, as if the cauſe of their mortifications, while Byram for her ſake enjoyed it—Lord Armathwaite endeavoured to apologize and to ſooth his wife, but in vain—Lady Jemima, now juſt ready to make her appearance, ruſhed in, ſeized Lambert, and called for the tea—ſhe ſcrutinized the whole party with her glaſs, and then turned half away to laugh—ſhe took as much notice of Joanna as ſhe thought proper, for one ſo much beneath her, and then fixed her attention on Byram, tormenting him in her uſual ſtrain on the point of their marriage.—In the mean time Lord Armathwaite went round the room with Joanna, as if ſhewing her the pictures.

pictures.—Byram perceived that he talked very earneſtly to her, and that her mode of behaviour to him was much ſoftened. From what he obſerved, he began to ſuſpect ſome contingency in her proſpect that depended on the old lady's life; and his hopes and his ſpirits ſunk together.

CHAP. XI.

The coach was ready in about half an hour; and the Ruffords, who had only muttered their woes to each other ſince their ſcolding, roſe in ſilence to depart.—Lord Armathwaite preſſed Byram to ſtay, and aſked the Counteſs if ſhe had any objection. She replied, "No;" and added, "Let the child ſtay too, if ſhe likes it." But neither of them accepted the diſtinction; and the Counteſs, repeating very often her expreſſions of protection to Joanna, ſuffered her to follow. Lord Armathwaite, as if to pleaſe his lady, led her to the carriage. Lambert put Mrs. Rufford and her daughter in; and then turning round to look for Joanna, he ſaw the tears guſh from her eyes as the Earl quitted her hand:——it was ſtrange;——but he ſoon reſolved

reſolved this emotion into the unpleaſant incident of the viſit.

Scarcely a word was ſpoken till they reached home; and then nothing was to be heard but complaint and invective.—Miſs Rufford vented her rage and ſarcaſms on Joan in open abuſe of her new protector. Mrs. Rufford was *really ſorry*, becauſe ſhe thought they might have had ſuch a nice pool. Mr. Rufford ſeemed half inclined to blame Sally for cruſhing his hopes from this Right Honourable friendſhip, though he could ſay little in vindication of the Counteſs.

On one point the family ſeemed agreed ——this was, that they would have an early ſupper, and go to bed. At the annunciation of this reſolve, Joan was quitting the room, when Miſs Rufford, with the moſt provoking formality, beſought *the Honourable Miſs Doveridge* to remain where ſhe was, and not to give herſelf any trouble about

about the ſupper, leſt ſhe might hurt the tender feelings of her new friend.—"How can you be ſo cruel?" were words not to to be repreſſed!——ſhe burſt into tears, and went away.

On her now all the invective ſettled; and on Byram ſoon after, for ſuggeſting her innocence. Mr. Rufford called for a bottle of Madeira, and ſeemed willing to drown unpleaſant recollections. Mrs. Rufford went to ſleep; and her daughter, with all the agitation of anger not to be forgotten, ſat down to mend a large orifice in her apron—the prime token ſhe had brought away from the houſe of malediction.

Miſs Doveridge was loudly called to ſupper, Miſs Rufford ſuperciliouſly refuſing to take her place till ſhe came, and then, with her moſt taunting affectation, offering her the upper hand. All but Lambert ſeemed in a conſpiracy to torment her; till, in a tone of firm dignity that ſeemed to

awe

awe them, ſhe uttered the ſhort ſentence —" Be leſs cruel; or you will drive me to do what you may have cauſe to repent of!" ——Nothing could extort another word from her; and when Mr. Rufford had ſaid grace, ſhe curtſied her *good night*, and withdrew. Her words ſeemed to retain their power, even in her abſence, for ſhe was no more named while Byram remained one of the company.

The fate of poor Joanna ſeemed now ſo rapidly drawing to a criſis, and the capricious cruelty of the Rufford family ſeemed ſo friendly to Lambert's wiſhes, that he revolved all night the poſſibility of obtaining half an hour's private converſation with her before he left the houſe, when he meant to urge directly the alternative his paſſion offered her. Her myſterious menace to her tormentors he conſtrued to his own advantage, and waited impatiently for day-break, not doubting that, if he roſe early, he might procure an interview with her:

her: but he waited and watched in vain; for, on leaving his apartment, he ſaw her deeply engaged in the buſineſs of ironing; and the anſwers he obtained to his civil enquiries, at the door of the laundry, ſhewed no diſpoſition in Joanna to avail herſelf of his ſentiments in her favour.

Underſtanding, at breakfaſt, from Miſs Rufford, whoſe chagrin was not yet worn off, that there was little chance of his ſeeing her dependent, he determined to return to London, and from thence to addreſs her more earneſtly than ever. No oppoſition was now made to his departure. Lady Armathwaite's *frankneſs* had ſo entirely engroſſed the party, that they ſeemed deaf to all other ſubjects, till the poſt brought a letter to Mr. Rufford, which he ſcanned with an eye that declared the contents ſomewhat perplexing. His wife and daughter had quitted the room; and when he had, two or three times, deliberately peruſed the letter, he turned about, as if

ſeeking

ſeeking ſome one to unboſom himſelf to—"A very curious epiſtle, indeed!" ejaculated the divine, removing his ſpectacles from their ſeat on his noſe. "I wonder who, or what, the man takes me for that wrote it?——to ſuppoſe that a man of *my* character, and holy profeſſion, would ſo betray a ſacred truſt!——Oh, it is ſcandalous to think what times we live in!—See here," ſaid he, holding out the paper to his companion,—"ſee what a pretty fellow this is——I ſuppoſe you may know him." Lambert read as follows:

SIR,

"I WAS at Bath a few weeks this ſeaſon, and there I met a very pretty girl—a ſort of *protegée* to a tabby, whoſe name I cannot charge my memory with; but her ſon has ruined her, and ſhe is gone abroad. I underſtand this *protegée* of her's went by the name of Doveridge, but I am told ſhe is a natural daughter of

your's, and the old woman ſhe was with. Perhaps you would have no objection to getting rid of ſuch an incumbrance, eſpecially as her mother has ſneaked off; if ſo, I live as much in ſtyle as any man of my rank and fortune. I love the girl, and I will make her the beſt ſettlement I ever offered—a houſe, ſervants, carriage, table, and twelve hundred pounds a year. I wait your anſwer; and am, with profound reſpect,

" Sir,
" Your moſt obedient, and
" Very humble ſervant,

SURCHESTER."

Sçavoir Vivre,
10th Feb.

Byram was ſhocked at the inſult offered to Joanna in this letter. He knew Lord Surcheſter to be one of thoſe common perſonages in London, and in all places of public ſociety, who ſtick at nothing to keep up the character of *men of faſhion.* He

was

was, however, glad to perceive in Mr. Rufford's countenance, and behaviour, all the ſymptoms of honeſt indignation; and offered to expedite the important buſineſs of cruſhing ſuch libertine views, by being himſelf the bearer of his reply, which the compoſer of ſermons, after about an hour and half's cogitation in his ſtudy, brought forth directed, in a hand his gout apologized for,—To the Right Hon. my Lord Surcheſter, *Sçavoir Vivre ſtreet*, London.—Lambert eagerly took the charge of it, and was ſoon on the road to London. He ſtopped in St. James's ſtreet, in his way to his chambers, and enquiring for Lord Surcheſter, was introduced to him. He requeſted a private interview; and then, with ſome expreſſions that intimated his opinion, delivered Mr. Rufford's reply, which he was aſtoniſhed to perceive effected no change in the features of his lordſhip. He waited only till he ſaw him grin at the ſubſcription, and then ſaying, he hoped his lordſhip had enough now of

making ſuch overtures, was retreating, when the peer, taking a caper acroſs the room, and aſking himſelf with much energy, and a faſhionable oath, whether he was not a lucky dog, turned his attention to the bearer of the letter, with a broad ſtare at his features. Recollecting Byram as one of thoſe facile characters who mingle in all companies, and ſeldom render themſelves diſagreeable by oppoſition, he ſhook him heartily by the hand, and thanked him for being the meſſenger of ſuch good news. Lambert drew back, and, looking grave, ſaid he was glad to find his lordſhip had yet ſenſe enough to be pleaſed with a diſappointment.—"Diſappointment! my boy," repeated he, clapping Byram on the back—"why, 'tis the very thing I could wiſh—the old fellow's a wiſe one; he knows his intereſt; but he's for making a deviliſh hard bargain though. ——Well, let him ſend her up: I'll have her put in training immediately. Do you know her? I ſuppoſe ſhe's very ignorant

—ſhe

—ſhe looks ſo; for ſhe bluſhed furiouſly once when I ſtopped her in the paſſage at her mother's lodgings, and tried to make her acquainted. But I'll have maſters of all ſorts for her; and ſhe ſhall have the neateſt carriage in town; and then I ſhall be a happy man!"

"You would be a villain!" muttered Lambert. "Thank heaven, my Lord," ſaid he aloud, "Miſs Doveridge is too well protected to fear you." "Protected!" rejoined the nobleman:—"why the old man is as meek as I could wiſh him—he is wiſer than to refuſe ſuch an offer for his brat. See, here, what he ſays, if you don't know already."

He then ſhewed Lambert Mr. Rufford's letter; when, to his inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment, he found that he had been duped, and made the meſſenger of a moſt nefarious acquieſcence; that Mr. Rufford had written in a ſtyle totally different from that

in which he had expreſſed himſelf to him; that he pretended to take for granted a ſuppoſition, not to be admitted, that Lord Surcheſter's intention was to make Joanna his wife; that he had moſt artfully, and moſt infamouſly, ſtipulated for a previous reimburſement of all the expences of her maintenance and education, which he falſely aſſerted to have been enormous, and to have fallen wholly on himſelf; and, moreover, he did not deny, nor attempt to contradict, the illegitimate pedigree his lordſhip had beſtowed upon her.

Lord Surcheſter, with more ſhrewdneſs than Lambert had promptitude enough to anſwer, aſked him what he now thought of old *Dominie*; ſeemed elated with his ſuperior knowledge of the world; and declared his intention of ſetting off the next morning for Mr. Rufford's. Lambert replied only by a requeſt, to be allowed a copy of the letter he had brought. Lord Surcheſter (who, in the mood of the moment,

or

or perhaps at any other time, would have parted with whatever a prudent man would have kept) told him he might have the original, if he could make any uſe of it. They parted, ſeemingly good friends; and Lambert, having diſcharged his chaiſe, and procured another, returned with all poſſible expedition the way he had come; hoping he might at once ſave Joanna from the villainy of her protector, and induce her to accept him.

His mind was in too perturbed a ſtate to admit of his forming any other plan than that of going abruptly to the vicarage, and demanding an interview with Miſs Doveridge; but all cogitation was ſoon rendered nugatory; for, at the inn at Hounſlow, where he ſtopped to change his carriage, he bolted on Mr. Rufford himſelf, who, puffing and blowing with importance and expedition, was calling loudly for a chaiſe, and enquiring of

two or three waiters for ſomebody he ſeemed in queſt of.

Perceiving, by a light one of them held, that it was Byram who was coming up, he attacked him in the moſt furious language for ſome unintelligible miſdemeanour:—he could only make out that he was a ſcoundrel and a villain, and that the law ſhould make him repent;—'till the old gentleman, ſeeming to recollect, from the ſtatute book, that his offence, whatever it was, did not come within the law's cognizance, again adverted to the powerful artillery of ſcripture-phraſed abuſe, and ſacred invective.

At this moment out popped from a little waiting parlour the lively Miſs Rufford, to whom Lambert willingly addreſſed himſelf for that information her father's vehemence with-held. She curtſied, and ſimpered, and ogled, and replied—that as her papa was obliged to come to town on

on this *molancholy* buſineſs, ſhe had taken the opportunity to ſee a little of the world. She ſuppoſed her papa would be kept, perhaps, a week in *Lunnun*, and in that time ſhe thought a body *mought* ſee a good bit of it.

This was but little more ſatisfactory than the interjection of Mr. Rufford; and Lambert ſeriouſly and earneſtly begged to know what it was that was laid to his charge, and what had occaſioned this precipitate journey. At laſt ſome incoherent proteſtations that the expences of it ſhould be charged to *Joan's eſtate*, told him that ſhe was the cauſe of it; and in about a quarter of an hour more he learnt, that, in conſequence of what Miſs Rufford called her *gently rebuking* her, for her behaviour the preceding evening, Joanna had privately quitted the houſe, and was not to be heard of; and that the ſuſpicion of her having fled to Lambert had occaſioned Mr. Rufford's taking the road to town.

This idea being no longer tenable, either by folly or obſtinacy, the old gentleman ſeemed inclined to return home, to which meaſure his daughter ſeemed duly averſe. She conjectured that Byram was going to London, and laid out, with all the little cunning ſhe was miſtreſs of, to accompany him thither. He endured all her idiocy and impertinence tamely, for he was meditating only how he ſhould moſt completely overwhelm her father in his own iniquity; and ſhe had proceeded ſo far as to lay hold on his arm, to awaken his attention and procure his concurrence, when Lambert, taking from his pocket-book the letter to Lord Surcheſter, ſhewed it to Mr. Rufford, bidding him recognize it, and bluſh. The old gentleman obeyed to the utmoſt of his power in both points; having firſt, however, tried the ſucceſs of a ſtout denial. He then proteſted he had underſtood Lord Surcheſter's overture as that of marriage; blamed his own poor fooliſh head that was not equal to the length

length of other men's; and thanked heaven for ſending in his favour the interpoſition of Byram, to ſave him from an error his zeal for Joan's advantage might have led him into, but at which he now ſhuddered, even in recollecting it.

Lambert had ſo infinitely the ſuperiority, that Mr. Rufford had no hope but that of purchaſing his ſilence by unconditional ſubmiſſion. Common civility, to a man under ſuch degrading circumſtances, would have been almoſt tantamount to inſult:— Lambert, therefore, thought of nothing but ſearching for Joanna, leſt by accident ſhe ſhould fall in Lord Surcheſter's way; he therefore inſiſted on Mr. Rufford's accompanying him back to his living, and offering, in the moſt public, even if it were the moſt humiliating manner, every inducement that could allure Miſs Doveridge to return. Incenſed and ſoured as he was, he refuſed to be tormented with the vivacious impromptus of Miſs Sally; ſhe had

therefore her option of the eaſt or weſt—*dear Lunnun* predominated, and ſhe ſet off for the charming place, too ignorant and too confident to ſuppoſe ſhe wanted any eſcort.

CHAP. XII.

No enquiry was omitted on the road to Milham that could procure tidings of Joanna; but it ſoon appeared that there was little chance of her being betrayed; for the anſwer returned as they drew near Mr. Rufford's pariſh, convinced Lambert that his flock rejoiced ſecretly in the emancipation of the wretched Joanna. The old gentleman's fatigue would not ſuffer him to go farther than his own door; but his companion continued the ſearch for more than three days; the laſt place he had ſearched was Henley; and he was returning by Caverſham, to give a melancholy account of his ill ſucceſs, when his poſtillion ſuddenly ſtopping, told him there was a young woman on the road before them who ſeemed to anſwer the

the deſcription of the lady he was ſeeking—Lambert looked forward, and being convinced the lad was right, he jumped out of the chaiſe, and ran to overtake her—ſhe turned round at the inſtant, and ſtaggering a few paces, fell to the ground.

It was ſome minutes after Lambert had raiſed her, and aſſured her of her ſafety, before Joanna, who appeared in the laſt ſtage of weakneſs and fatigue, ſeemed to comprehend her ſituation: he put her into the chaiſe, ſhe offering on her part, no oppoſition; but as he had his own intereſt to conſult, he determined not yet to carry her to Mr. Rufford's, but make towards the neareſt farm-houſe: there he learnt from her that the reduplicated cruelty of the family ſhe depended on, had driven her to the deſperate meaſure of quitting the houſe, in the hopes of getting her living in peace, by the labour of her hands, but that finding it a much more difficult matter to get employed than ſhe had

had imagined it, ſhe had wandered till her money was ſpent, and now had no alternative but throwing herſelf on the mercy of her enemies.

From this ſtill more deſperate meaſure, Lambert warned her by a recital of Lord Surcheſter's application, and by the production of her guardian's reply to it. Surpriſe, fear, horror, all co-operated with Lambert's expreſſions of ſympathy and vows of attachment, to make her look towards him as a preferable protector. She told him frankly, it was ſolely to her diſtreſſes that he owed her hearing him with any degree of complacency; but that conſidering him as her only reſource againſt more dangers that were crowding on her, and as one ſent perhaps by Providence to ſave her, if he thought proper to make her immediately his wife, ſhe would endeavour to diſcharge her duty to him as far as the harraſſed ſtate of her mind would permit. Byram was at the moment

moment too much in love to contemplate the indications of a tortured heart in this deſperate acquieſcence, to which nothing but the duty of ſelf-preſervation prompted the object of his paſſion:—he could not ſee that in it ſhe renounced the deareſt tie that had held her to the world and its miſeries; that in one ſigh given to the memory of her firſt affection, ſhe ſacrificed all that ſhe had fondly imagined, and had a thouſand times been aſſured, ſhould atone for the want of parents and protection, for indigence and hardſhip of every kind—he could not hear the adjuration that called heaven to witneſs her ſubmiſſion to neceſſity, and her unſhaken conſtancy: he could not trace her tears to their true ſource, the ſevering, the final ſeparation of all that youth in its moſt fervid colour paints to the imagination as perfect union—for Byram was moſt ſelfiſhly enamoured, and would have ſhut his ears againſt any information that could have operated againſt his hopes.—Near

as

as he was to their accompliſhment, he cared no otherwiſe for the ſtate of Joanna's affections, or the portion of them he might be allowed, than as her ſteadineſs was concerned in the queſtion; and perhaps had he been aware that ſhe was too wretched to have preference or choice, it might only have ſerved to abate his ardour by increaſing his ſecurity.

It was the awe which Joanna's character bore with it; it was the want of habitude in vice, or perhaps it was a prudent wiſh to render her indiſſolubly his own, that in the preſent circumſtances excluded from his mind all idea of a leſs permanent ſituation than that of wedlock. Lambert's character had yet no die ſtamped on it: he might be any thing that the next revolution of the earth ſhould preſent to his choice, and he now ſeemed, while doing a really virtuous and humane action, from whatever motive, to be a hopeful candidate for the praiſe of virtue.

Qualms

Qualms of conſcience with regard to filial duty troubled him not; he pledged himſelf to Joanna for his father's forgiveneſs, if their marriage could only be kept ſecret for a few months, when he ſhould be of age, and he had reaſon to believe Lady Jemima Fawley would have diſpoſed of herſelf; and he next turned his thoughts towards the moſt ſecret method of keeping their plans to themſelves.

All other ſchemes being rendered objectionable by the driver's being privy to the rencontre, it was decided that he ſhould accompany her to Milham, and there formally reſtore her to Mr. Rufford, from whoſe reſentment ſhe would have the leſs to fear on account of his daughter's abſence, and Byram's hold over his character. —Their ſcheme was, that he ſhould then quit the place in haſte, as being earneſt to get back to London; that in the mean time ſhe ſhould prepare whatever cloaths ſhe might want for a journey, that ſhe

ſhould

ſhould engage the young maid-ſervant, of whoſe fidelity ſhe was ſecure, to accompany her, and that before day-break ſhe ſhould quit the houſe and meet Byram, who would have a chaiſe ready at a ſmall diſtance. The many dangers awaiting them, made it adviſable that they ſhould be married out of England. —The uncertainties attending croſſing the channel made Scotland the preferable place; and Joanna, in all the paſſiveneſs of wretchedneſs, and all the dejection of a breaking heart, gave her concurrence.

She was received at her guardian's in a way that ſhewed how neceſſary a powerful friend was to her. To avoid the reproaches rained on her, ſhe begged permiſſion to go to bed; and Byram, remaining no longer than to convince the ſhallow craft of Mr. Rufford, that he for ever forſwore him, his houſe and connections, went to Reading to wait there the hour of meeting Joanna.

Every

Every thing proſpered as he wiſhed; and when ſhe was miſſed in the morning, the old gentleman, perhaps, recollecting if he *did* ſuſpect Byram, that he had in his poſſeſſion what he ſhould not care to ſee brought to light, forbore to moleſt the fugitives.

Purſuing the croſs roads they had entered the county of York, when Byram perceived that the hurry and fatigue would be more than Joanna could bear without reſt, and he began to fear that he ſhould not be able to prevail on her to go forward. To obviate this danger, he meditated on the poſſibility of their being married ſhort of the uſual place; and recollecting that not far from Roſlington bridge, he had a friend ſettled on a ſmall living, he propoſed to Joanna an application to him. She approved the idea: for ſhe almoſt wiſhed for an obſtacle that might releaſe her: they turned out of the road, and ſoon found the diminutive village they were in queſt

queſt of—it contained only a ſmall public-houſe, and one farm-houſe, and Byram leaving Joanna and her maid at the former, took a horſe and rode over to the church to ſeek his old ſchool-fellow Mr. Broome.

This young man had been educated by his father, at Eton, with the reſolution of making him what no one of his family had ever yet been, a ſcholar and a gentleman. The ſcheme turned out in the common way—at Eton he had learnt to be expenſive—at Cambridge his ſpirit had been broken by mortification, his father's ſlender finances were exhauſted in this vanity, and at his death he found himſelf unprovided for, and with a ſiſter to maintain. By great good fortune he had obtained orders and a very ſmall curacy, and lately the friendſhip of a gentleman in the neighbourhood had placed him in the vicarage of N——, where he lived irreproachably and reſpected.

He

He received Byram's viſit with joy and gratitude, and having learnt under a promiſe of ſecrecy, the important errand he travelled on, he promiſed his concurrence on theſe only conditions, that his ſafety ſhould be conſulted, and that Byram ſhould for that purpoſe, wait the publication of banns: he pledged himſelf for his perfect ſecurity in this obſcure village, and made him an offer of his own and his ſiſter's beſt endeavours, if he could prevail on Miſs Doveridge to reſide with them for the time.

Joanna who was really ill, and wiſhed for quiet, made no objection to the propoſal—Byram thought he could turn the accident to his own advantage by writing to his father, as if he was on a viſit to Broome; and accordingly they removed to the vicarage where they were very hoſpitably entertained, and where their time paſſed not unpleaſantly. Miſs Broome, who fortunately for herſelf, had not an idea

idea above her ſituation, was delighted with her elegant viſitor; and Joanna by appearing pleaſed, endeavoured to repay her aſſiduities.

No accident happened to diſconcert their ſcheme; the next town was too far off, to hear ſuddenly of the lovers, who were married without moleſtation the firſt day that the law permitted it.

Byram ſtill ardent and ſolicitous, immediately brought his wife to London, as the beſt place of concealment, and took for her a very neat houſe in a quiet ſituation near his chambers; and regarding rather Joanna's *natural* ſituation than that he found her in, he procured her, to the utmoſt extent of his finances, every thing that could tend to her comfort. She accepted his kind intentions; and in a little time found gratitude no bad ſubſtitute for love. Nothing was wanting on her part that could ſecure his reſpect and eſteem: he

he ſpent every leiſure hour with her in all the comfort of domeſtic peace, and mutual attention.——In a few months her ſenſe of duty, and his unwearied kindneſſes, produced a faint glow of chearfulneſs in her mind; he cheriſhed it with rapture; and fearing her health might ſuffer from a cloſe confinement to London, he removed her to a ſmall diſtance from it, for the autumn: his father had been and ſtill remained engaged in the care of an eſtate in Ireland; ſo that he had leſs to fear from his diſcoveries. Miſs Rufford was ſafe at Milham, after her excurſion to dear *Lunnun*; and there ſeemed no one to watch their movements.

CHAP. XIII.

A YEAR had flown over the heads of theſe two perſons, and Fortune ſeemed to have repented of her early cruelties to Joanna. Nothing could have been more ſtrictly right than the conduct of Byram. His motive ſeemed indubitable; and his wife reverenced him as one of the firſt of human characters. His ardour was ſtill kept alive by expectation; and the birth of a daughter ſeemed an event that ſecured him to the ſide of virtue. His love for Joanna was at the time increaſed by the more than common danger her life was for ſome days in: in his imminent fear of her death, he had required nothing but to have it counteracted by the ſmalleſt hope: he was gratified; ſhe was ſafe; but her re-

 covery,

covery, though almoſt certain, was not likely to be ſpeedy.

In this time, and when he was cut off from the reſource of her ſociety by the neceſſity of her being kept quiet, and retiring very early to reſt, he began to reflect on the ſtep to which love had prompted him, and to examine the hitherto diſregarded ſtate of his finances. He was now of age, and had hoped his father would, at that period of emancipation, if he did not render him independent, very much increaſe his liberality towards him; but Sir Clifford always ſeemed, on application, diſpoſed to make every favour he could beſtow conditional; and the condition annexed being no other than that of a marriage with the ſtill-to-be-diſpoſed-of Lady Jemima Fawley, Byram did not iterate his petition.

The expences of Joanna's illneſs were now felt as ſad inroads on an income he had

no

no hope of increaſing, for many years. Unuſed to think very deeply, the neceſſity was galling to an inert mind, and he ſought in company a refuge againſt it;—the town was almoſt novel to him, for in Joanna's ſociety he had almoſt forgotten the world. He was, as on a firſt acquaintance with it, charmed by its allurements:——he thought all the women greatly improved; he ſaw many of his acquaintance elevated, by fortunate matches, to a ſituation they had no inherent pretenſions to; and he began to think he had been precipitate; and that to have married a woman for whom he had no predilection, was, on the whole, better than to have gratified his paſſion at the expence of his eaſe.

With ſuch ſentiments as theſe, he ſaw his amiable wife recover ſlowly from dangers and ſufferings which had never, for a moment, diſturbed the placid excellence of her temper, or extorted from her one expreſſion of regret or impatience; but

theſe ſilent merits were not likely to plead very forcibly againſt the cowardice that ſhrinks from the common evils of life, or the covetouſneſs that pines for what virtue has once rejected. The luſtre of Joanna's eyes was gone—the glow of health had left her complexion—and her huſband had no taſte for thoſe beauties, ſtill more intereſting to a correct judgment, which nothing could ſeparate from her mind or her countenance.

The unſuſpicious temper of his wife, and her exalted opinion of his virtues, kept her blind to this change; and when ſhe was ſo well recovered as to reſume her uſual habits of induſtry, ſhe flattered herſelf ſhe ſhould find her happineſs ſtill increaſed, by the addition of her promiſing infant to her former joys. The ſummer was begun; the world had a cheerful aſpect; and if ever a ſad reflection obtruded on her well diſciplined mind, ſhe chaſed it, as rebellious and ungrateful.

Her

Her firſt uneaſineſs aroſe from her perceiving that Byram had no love for his child: his abſences from home, his numerous engagements, ſhe was neither alarmed at, nor inquiſitive about:—the hours that they had ſpent together ſhe remembered as pleaſant; but ſhe conſidered his confining himſelf then with her as a kind attention to her eaſe, the neceſſity of which had ceaſed; ſhe was aware that it was of importance to him to make connections, and to get forward in his preparation for the bar, to which he was to be called in the next term. When his affection was warm, he had talked much of the advantages he expected from his profeſſion; and ſhe felt grateful for the application ſhe ſuppoſed he exerted; ſhe did not ſuſpect that his mornings (which ſhe imagined devoted to his books) were ſpent in the faſhionable lounges, with men from whoſe opinions he could gain nothing but ill; nor that his evenings (devoted in her idea to a reſpectable ſet of friends) were ſeldom

employed ſo innocently as in the diſſipation of an opera or a play-houſe.

To pacify her feelings at his neglect of the little Elizabeth, ſhe conſidered how entirely confined to a female boſom muſt be the amuſement derived from a baby; the tenderneſs required even in moving it, ſhe reflected, made it an anxious charge; men could not accommodate their muſcles to the delicate preſſure an infant required; but ſhe had ſeen Lord Armathwaite, when an impetuous lad, nurſe a cottager's child with tenderneſs and pleaſure, while the mother went to gather fruit for him:—here her thoughts dared not dwell;—ſhe *hoped*, nay, ſhe was *ſure*, that when Elizabeth could run alone, her father would be fond of her.

It now began to grow a cuſtom with Byram to return home very late at night, and always gloomy; then, occaſionally, he would remain out till near noon, and give

no

no reaſon for it. His wife grew alarmed; and the anſwer to her next requeſt of a little money, being a ſullen declaration that he knew not where to get any, ſhe began to be ſeriouſly uneaſy. She adviſed ſome covert application to Mr. Rufford for the arrear of her income. Byram told her ſhe was a fool, as ſuch a ſtep would betray his marriage, and ruin him. He gave her a few guineas, and told her he was going into the country for ſome weeks, during which time ſhe muſt live as frugally as ſhe could.

Love itſelf could not be blind to the contraſt between Lambert's attentions the preceding year and his cruel neglect now; —a conviction, too painful to be diſguiſed, burſt on her ſenſes; and with the moſt earneſt (for it was unaffected) pathos, ſhe begged to know how ſhe had loſt his regard. He ſtrove to be civil; but his civility ſhewed the total alienation of his love.

——A flood of tears ſtopped Joanna's enquiries, and he abruptly left her.

She now knew nothing of his actions—he rarely ſlept at home, and many days paſſed without her having five minutes' converſation with him. He returned one evening very late, and apparently much fatigued: he told her he had been to Milham, having heard of the death of Mr. Rufford; that he had made an enquiry after her property, and had the *ſatisfaction* of finding her guardian had improved his confidential truſt to his own advantage, by ſelling out of the funds the one thouſand pounds allotted for her fortune; and that as he had died wholly inſolvent, nothing was to be hoped for. To this intelligence, which no preface introduced, no kindneſs ſoftened, he added a few ſentences, muttered aloud, againſt his own folly; and replying to her earneſt query, whether he had divulged their marriage, that he had not, he quitted her, while ſhe ejaculated thanks to heaven

heaven that Lord Armathwaite did not yet know what ſhe had done.

At the next opportunity of ſpeaking to him, ſhe begged that ſhe might be allowed to part with all thoſe little ſuperfluities of comfort, with which, in the days of his fondneſs, he had decked her ſituation.—Without reflecting on the virtue that prompted this ſelf-denying petition, he told her he had already thought on that ſubject; that he had taken a lodging for her a little way out of town, where he would have her remain while he was in the country, and where one maid-ſervant would be ſufficient for her.

Small as was Joanna's portion of ſelf-love, ſhe could not but feel the unpitying ſtoiciſm with which this mandate was iſſued; but, in the recollection that ſhe was Byram's wife, ſhe endeavoured to forget the punctilious ſcrupuloſity with which he

had thought it neceſſary to provide for her as a nobleman's daughter.

He remained only three days longer in town; during which time he never ſaw her but when he appeared intoxicated, or ſo agitated, as to make her ſuſpect he had had recourſe to that moſt deſperate of all refuge, the gaming-table. He ordered her to remain where ſhe was till two days after his departure, and quitted her without giving her the ſmalleſt ſatisfaction as to his deſtination, the length of his ſtay, or the means by which ſhe was to exiſt in his abſence. With all the grudging that can accompany the *wiſh*, but not the *courage*, to be unjuſt, he threw a ſmall bank bill on the table, and with a ſneer at the whimpering of his infant, whom her mother had taken from her cradle, that ſhe might at leaſt obtain a look from him, he quitted the houſe, now a confirmed hard-hearted tyrant.

He

He had not been gone ſix hours, when enquiries were made after him; and ſhe, not aware that any caution was neceſſary, with a countenance of ſorrow, that corroborated any unfavourable ſurmiſes, replied to them, by declaring her ignorance reſpecting Byram. On the following day ſhe had the miſery of witneſſing the ceremonies with which an execution enters the houſe of an inſolvent. The goods were ſeized for the arrears of rent, but ſhe met with mercy from the creditor, and was allowed to retire with her own wardrobe, that of her child, and the money her huſband had left her, to the lodging he had taken for her. Her maid, Nelly, clung to her and her fortunes in all extremities; and Joanna, whom the world had long ceaſed to have the power of cheating, ſtrove to be at peace in her miſeries.

It was impoſſible, however, not to be anxious: ſhe could not but hope Byram would, in his cooler moments, and when

detached perhaps from ill adviſers, write to her; and buoyed up by this hope, let all who know what it is to pant with expectation, and to turn ſick with diſappointment, judge of her daily iterated feelings, when the poſtman ſometimes paſſed the door, ſometimes brought letters to others in the houſe, and, not unfrequently, after having paſſed, returned again to diſappoint her by an omitted letter recollected afterwards.

CHAP. XIV.

Two months wore away thus; and Joanna's ſtrength and reſources were faſt failing under her agonizing ſituation. The neceſſity of her life to the preſervation of her daughter's, encouraged her to exertions of her ſpirits, which, while they diſguiſed, encreaſed her danger; and in another fortnight ſhe was unable to quit her bed. Aware of her perilous ſtate, and of the aggravation it received by her total eſtrangement from the whole world, excepting only her maid-ſervant, ſhe called her to her; and firſt endeavouring to inſpire her with fortitude to behold her miſtreſs's diſtreſſes, ſhe began to plan with her ſome ſcheme for the preſervation of the little infant, when it ſhould have loſt the only parental care it could look for. Nelly was well

well diſpoſed to be humane, but the extreme poverty to which ſhe was born, and in which her friends lived, was unfriendly to her good intentions. Her miſtreſs, therefore, having no other reſource, thought of intereſting Lord Armathwaite for the young Elizabeth; and accordingly, at her next interval of ſtrength, ſhe wrote a letter to his lordſhip, in which, giving a brief account of her misfortunes, ſhe conjured him, by the remembrance of their former hopes, to protect from the horrors of want, a creature, who was denied the foſtering care of both its parents. This letter ſhe ſealed, and kept conſtantly under her pillow, from whence her maid was to take it, immediately after her deceaſe; and, as ſoon as was poſſible, to remove herſelf and the child to her own home, where ſhe might, probably, as it was in the village near which Lord Armathwaite's houſe ſtood, deliver her requeſt to him privately.

The

The letter had been written, and had remained in this ſituation near a week, in which period Joanna had grown daily more feeble; when, in the middle of one of her ſleepleſs nights, ſhe was alarmed, and her baby was awakened, by the foot-ſteps of ſome one who aſcended the ſtairs heavily, and then burſt into the room furiouſly. It was Byram, who, ſtanding at her bed's foot, ſoon manifeſted by his temper that he had not had wine enough to overcome his intellects, but ſufficient to exaſperate all his evil paſſions.

She ſpoke to him with ſurpriſe and tenderneſs, and thanked heaven that ſhe ſhould ſee him before ſhe died. He ſtarted at the word, and, drawing nearer to her, pulled back the curtain with violence: the letter dropped from under her pillow; he picked it up, and, by the candle in his hand, read the direction. Joanna ſaw inſtantly the miſconſtruction he would affix to its contents. She begged to be heard,

while

while he muttered and read; but of reaſon he was now incapable, even in his few ſober hours.

When he had finiſhed the peruſal of the letter, he threw himſelf down on a chair, and remaining ſilent, his wife again earneſtly begged for a hearing. He replied—"You gave your hand to me—and your heart is another's: to him, therefore, you may betake yourſelf."

"When I gave you my hand, Byram," ſhe replied, "the beſt affections of my heart were your's:——you cannot ſay I was inſenſible to your kindneſs, or ungrateful for it while it laſted. It was my early fate to know, and to love, Lord Armathwaite; it was my early proſpect that I ſhould be his wife;—heaven only knows why I was not ſo;—it is to me a ſecret.—When my hopes were at the faireſt, he changed his intentions—married a woman he could not love—and left me to the cruelty

elty of the Ruffords. For this unaccountable departure from all his promiſes he has never offered the ſmalleſt excuſe. He told me he had done it through a hatred of poverty, and a love of money; that his motive for ſuch conduct was as bad as that of any one who follows the guidance of avarice; and that though he deteſted the woman he had married, he was well pleaſed with what he had done. Once, indeed, (the laſt time I ever ſaw him) he ſaid, a time might come which ſhould clear up the myſtery of his conduct; but I never hoped it; and, I am ſure, ſince I have been your wife I have ceaſed to wiſh it. I never deceived you by feigned affection. Before our marriage, I told you, fear for myſelf and gratitude to you were my motives; and theſe you profeſſed yourſelf diſpoſed to accept in lieu of love: but it is of little importance to vindicate myſelf—I ſhall not long give trouble to any one.—Suffer me to die in peace—and take care of your infant—it is all I aſk."

" And

"And all I aſk," returned Byram, "is, in any way, to be rid of you; for you are at this moment moſt abominably in my way. You are not, I dare ſay, ſo near dying as you fancy yourſelf; ſo you had better think what you ſhall do with yourſelf and Miſs, for I can do nothing more for either of you."

"How can you be ſo cruel?" aſked Joanna, almoſt exhauſted with her ſorrow. "Think what you were to me a year ago ——are you not aſhamed of your own inconſiſtency?"

"I am very much aſhamed of my wife and my poverty," replied he. "I have made a very fooliſh bargain—I have got myſelf three thouſand pounds into debt—my father will not pay it—and, as my liberty is not ſafe till it is paid, I muſt find ſome means of raiſing the ſupplies. As for you, I have not the ſmalleſt objection to your putting yourſelf under Lord Armathwaite's

mathwaite's protection. I always ſuppoſed you had a tenderneſs for him; but it was none of my buſineſs, ſo I never troubled you with queſtions. I think your's is a very good plan; and to facilitate it, I can tell you the cauſe of his marriage. The man is a weak, ſuperſtitious fool—he was brought up *righteouſly*—and ſo he is always puniſhing himſelf to act up to his methodiſtical canting character.—Charles Halnaby had, like many other men of faſhion, involved his circumſtances at play, and not having the means to get out, he did, what perhaps I may do in time,—he ſhot himſelf; but he did not do the buſineſs completely. Armathwaite was ſent for—for it was done in London—and to keep Charles from repeating the wiſeſt action, in my opinion, that a *poor* man can do, he promiſed to furniſh him with the money he wanted: but he did not, perhaps, conſider at the time that he had it not himſelf; ſo he marries this odious woman,

man, and ſets Charles afloat again—to ruin himſelf afreſh, as it has turned out."

"And do you not, Mr. Byram," ſaid Joanna, raiſing herſelf on her elbow, "admire ſuch generoſity?——O, had I known this!——"

"You would never have married me, I ſuppoſe," interrupted her huſband.—— "Well, I wiſh, with all my ſoul, you had known it: but, as to the merit of it—— why, it is all ſuperſtition. His lordſhip fancied it his duty to ſave the ſon, becauſe, I think, the mamma had coddled him through a fever, without catching it herſelf; for that, I ſuppoſe, was the merit of the buſineſs."

The inſulting wit of Byram's jeſting loquacity was loſt on his wife; but the merit decried ſunk deeply on her heart; and while it aggravated her regret for her own miſſed happineſs, it comforted her with a vivid

vivid hope and confidence, that, in the world of retribution, juſtice as well as mercy would be ſatisfied. She put no reſtraint on her ſorrow, or her emotions:—brutality, ſuch as Byram's, could not but alienate a mind, which depended alone on the good qualities of his for its attachment. His humour changed: he grew again moroſe; and ſaying, only—"You ſhall hear from me ſoon,"—he went away.

His viſit ſeemed not to have altered her ſituation, and ſhe waited ſeveral days in vain, expecting his coming again. Her child was now the only obſtacle to her ſinking into a deep corroſive melancholy: for its father, as ſhe could retain no reſpect, ſhe ceaſed to feel affection; and conſidering herſelf as apace verging towards the land where human diſtinctions avail not, ſhe indulged, innocently, the ſentiments ſhe had ſo virtuouſly oppoſed, and bleſſed her fate, which in the grave offered her a releaſe from all conflict. She doubted not

that

that heaven muſt approve that attachment which was founded ſolely in a preference of the good to the bad, and was ſatisfied that in her laſt prayers ſhe might ſafely join the names of all thoſe ſhe loved. She had got ſo far in her pious confidence as almoſt to look on her child without agony, and to think on its father without reſentment, when all her firmneſs of mind was ſhaken by a letter from Byram, in which he tranſmitted to her fifty pounds, and the following ſhew of conſolation:—

"NOTHING can give me greater concern, than that I recollect having given you, in my abrupt and imprudent viſit.

"You will, I am ſure, forgive it, when I ſay it was wholly owing to a perturbed ſtate of mind, rendered worſe by the means I had taken to ſupport myſelf under it. I told you truly, that I was in difficulties:—I am ſorry you are obliged to ſhare them with me; but you may now relieve your-

ſelf,

ſelf, and make me eaſy. I aſk nothing of you, but to forget you were ever my wife: —it is for your own ſake I aſk it, ſince to me it is nearly unimportant. You may be happy now, if you conſent;—you never can, if you loſe this opportunity. A few days may reſtore you to peace, and I ſincerely hope to happineſs, for I ſtill love you; and were I to ſuffer myſelf to think, I could not bid you, as I do, renounce me under your hand, and know me only as

" Your very ſincere friend,

" L. B.

" P. S. Direct to me at Bath."

The train into which Joanna had ſuffered her meditations to ſlide had tended to confine her ideas. Byram's letter promiſed her happineſs: ſhe knew of no happineſs but that which ſhould reſtore her to the original poſſeſſor of her heart. In the hectic fervour of her imagination, ſhe fancied her huſband's myſterious expreſſions imported no leſs than that Lady Armathwaite

was

was dead, and that he meant, now he had diſcovered her attachment, to facilitate her marriage with the Earl. Nothing had repreſſed in her heart a diſpoſition to repent of her having beſtowed her hand ſo unworthily, had ſhe not been a mother; but the innocent aggravator of her ſufferings was always, in its infant ſilence, their moſt eloquent conſolation, and in its ſmiles ſhe ſeemed repaid for her own tears. On a ſecond peruſal of the letter, for her ſenſes diſtruſted the firſt, ſhe thought ſhe ſaw the felicity that had mocked her once more offered to her; but the next reflection ſhewed it ſtill beyond her graſp. Sorrowfully ſhaking her head, and claſping ſtill cloſer to her boſom the little Elizabeth, ſhe inſtantly made her election. —— "Shall I forego thee, my babe?——Shall I deny myſelf to be thy mother?—or ſuffer thee to bear into the world with thee the ſuppoſition of infamy?——No!—the little time I have to live ſhall be marked with no cowardly deſertion of miſery——my heart

may

may love imprudently, but it ſhall never make me ſwerve culpably."

No circumſtance in Byram's conduct had, for a long time, afforded ground for a conjecture at all favourable to the integrity of his character, but this deficiency, of exerciſe had not abated the charitable candour of his wife's: ſhe ſaw infinite merit in his fancied motives, and it aſſiſted in reconciling her to the part ſhe had choſen. She haſtened to expreſs her ſenſe of his kindneſs, and in the evening of the ſame day replied to him in the following terms:

"YOUR letter, my dear Lambert, would have been myſterious to me, had not a ray of goodneſs beamed from it, and enlightened my intellects. I will not be ſo inſincere as to ſay your conduct has never been productive of uneaſineſs to me: it has coſt me many ſighs, and many tears; but it is I who am in part the cauſe of both; and

by your preſent kindneſs and tenderneſs towards me, all that I have ſuffered is obliterated. But do not ſuppoſe your wife ſtill ſuch a girl, as to forget, in a youthful, and perhaps too firm an attachment, the duties ſhe took on herſelf when ſhe became your wife. From my infancy, and ſo long as I dared truſt my heart with ſo dangerous a prepoſſeſſion, I loved Lord A.; and hope blinded me to the improbability of our union. My proſpect was cut off, and I omitted no exertion that could enable me to bear the ſtroke: reſentment towards him aided me; and as I had loved him, becauſe I believed him eminently worthy, I would have ceaſed to do ſo when I found him otherwiſe. I am aſhamed to confeſs how great was the ſtruggle. He once attempted to improve my opinion of his marriage. I felt that my fortitude could not ſtand without the aid of anger—I was wretched—you were kind to me. I thought you loved me, and I committed myſelf to your protection—not more afraid of the

Ruffords

Ruffords than of my own treacherous affections. Lord A. was too near—I muſt of neceſſity be much in his company—it was not to be riſqued. I married you moſt honeſtly; and your kindneſs ſoothed me; but when that was gone, and from your own lips I had learnt that I was an incumbrance to you, what could I do but repent and deſpair?

"I ſee in your letter your generous wiſh to promote my happineſs——I gueſs what has happened. Had it happened ſooner, I might have ſpared you much ſuffering; but I doubt not the wiſdom or the mercy of Providence, and to its decrees I cheerfully ſubmit. But can you imagine, my too indulgent Lambert, that, were the holy ties of marriage diſſoluble, I could be ſo deficient in tenderneſs, as to quit you, or my infant, for the ſake of indulging an affection, it, perhaps, were more meritorious to conquer? Our union was ſecret—I hope it is not leſs binding—

on my mind, I am ſure, it has all the force of the moſt public one. Let us, then, act according to its laws. While your difficulties continue, place me any where out of obſervation—keep me at the ſmalleſt expence poſſible——I have been uſed to work——I am not a poor helpleſs being that can ſubmit to no inconvenience without injury——I have not ſo long been accuſtomed to indulgence, as to need it; and in the kindneſs you can afford me, and the delight of rearing my little girl, I ſhall find an impulſe and reward that will ſweeten every exertion.

" Be aſſured, my Lambert, you poſſeſs every portion of my heart but its weakneſſes; and that were Lord A. now he is at liberty, to tempt me with my former proſpect, I would, without pain, reject it. —But in the character you drew of him, when I had laſt the melancholy ſatisfaction of converſing with you, you have every ſecurity:——he who could act as he has

has done, muſt be the maſter of his paſſions; and in his eyes I muſt be contemptible, were I not to be firm in my duty, however that duty may oppoſe our inclinations. I can live without his love: I ſhould be hurt to forfeit his eſteem.—— Should you have any intercourſe with him on this ſubject, tell him theſe are my ſentiments, and believe I will live and die

"Your very faithful wife,

"J. B."

CHAP. XV.

In the kindneſs of thoſe we love, there is a balm, healing beyond all medicine to a wounded mind. Joanna read frequently Byram's letter, and every re-peruſal of it preſented the merit that emanated from it, in a new light.—She thought no longer of dying, ſhe prayed for life to cheriſh her little one; and ſhe implored all the rewards of Heaven for her huſband.—She thought exultingly of the triumph ſhe had gained over her dormant paſſion; and retired to reſt with her baby in her arms, in a ſtate of peace and hope, that perhaps ſhe choſe rather to encourage than examine.—In her firſt ſleep, ſhe dreamt Lady Armathwaite was dead, and that ſhe herſelf was taking poſſeſſion of her ſituation. If ſhe felt diſappointed when ſhe awoke, it was but for an inſtant:

ſtant: ſhe could not but give one thought to the meritorious motive of gratitude to which he had ſacrificed: ſhe aſked herſelf whether Lambert's conduct was leſs laudable: ſhe wiſhed Lord Armathwaite happy in a ſecond marriage, and propheſied when her huſband's ſituation ſhould be more propitious, that the two families would be united by virtue and friendſhip, for the remainder of their lives.

Her expectation of a reply to her letter was far from painful; for ſhe was convinced it could only contain freſh motives of affection towards Lambert. She now took the moſt aſſiduous care of her wavering health, lived with the cloſeſt frugality, was thankful for the hardſhips of her youth which had left her no imaginary wants, and held herſelf in readineſs to purſue any courſe the next letter might point out. It came in a very ſhort time, but its language was not that of peace, the ſtyle of it was this:

" How could you be ſo ſtupid as to ſuppoſe I meant that Lady A. was dead? —She is more likely to live than at any time ſince her marriage—What nonſenſical romantic ideas you ſuffer to run away with your reaſon!—Nothing could more convince me you are the girl you would not be thought, than your imagining I wiſhed to releaſe you, in order to your marrying A. — This I can tell you—you may marry him when you and he pleaſe, for your marriage with me is not worth a ruſh—it is informal and conſequently illegal.—I would have perſuaded you; but as you will not be perſuaded, I muſt plainly tell you how I am circumſtanced, and then I ſhall leave you to make the beſt of your own ſituation.—You know I am deeply in debt; but you know not how deeply—my father will do nothing for me unleſs I marry A's ſiſter. I need not tell you I do not like her; but I like ſtarving in a jail leſs; ſo I have made up my mind to it, and have agreed.—Now, all I deſire

of

of you, is to give up your imaginary claims on me; and I will then make good to you the loſs of your own fortune, by paying you regularly forty pounds a year, which I will ſecure to Elizabeth after your death. To ſave trouble, I will as ſoon as I poſſeſs ſo much, transfer to you one thouſand pounds in the four per cents, the intereſt of which you can receive without any further communication with

"Your &c.

"L. B."

A ſtupor ſeized the ſenſes of Joanna when ſhe found how cruelly her credulity had deceived her: the character of Byram ſtood before her imagination in the blackeſt colours; and ſhe dreaded him as a monſter, a ſavage creature, who made innocence its prey, a deceiver who put on the maſk of virtue only to ſerve the moſt vicious purpoſes.—Perhaps ſhe was as unjuſt in her cenſures as in her applauſes—

ſhe would have verged nearer to the truth had ſhe ſuppoſed him only facile and unpitying, prone to indulgence, averſe to all the evils of life, a cowardly, a ſelfiſh being!—Was ſhe not then correct in fancying him a *monſter*?—alas! the term implies *infrequency*, and therefore ſuits not a character ſo common.

Joanna's temper was meek; but it was not abject; and ſhe reſented too deeply the indignity offered her, to accept it by replying to it.—She believed not the invalidity of her marriage; but to whom could ſhe have recourſe againſt her huſband? To Lord Armathwaite alone—here ſhe was certain of a defender againſt the intended cruelty; for ſhe knew a diſcovery of her marriage would thwart Byram's plans, but as the ſcale which contained her love for Byram roſe, that more worthily filled preponderated, and fearing Byram might revenge her application by divulging her attachment, and thus bring down

down added miſery on Lord Armathwaite, who was wholly in his wife's power, ſhe preferred ſuffering in ſilence.

The night was ſpent in rumination; and ſhe roſe the next morning feveriſh, and half inclined to refer herſelf to Sir Clifford Byram, thinking it impoſſible a father could protect a ſon in ſuch enormous baſeneſs. On this, in the courſe of the day, ſhe reſolved; and fearing her increaſing indiſpoſition might deprive her of the ability to write, ſhe began an humble ſimple ſtatement of facts, but her recollection overpowered her, and ſhe was prevented from proceeding, by the illneſs of her child, who partook her fever.

At this juncture her maid ſervant, the hitherto faithful follower of her fortunes, without the ſmalleſt provocation or any prelude of diſcontent, demanded her diſcharge. What were her views, or what her

reaſons, ſhe would not diſcloſe : ſhe receiv-ed her arrear of wages, unmoved by any expreſſion of regret from her miſtreſs ; and Joanna was now compelled to give up all care for herſelf, to attend on her infant.

Her mind remained in a ſtate of in-deciſion ; the letter to her father-in-law was uncompleted : paſt regrets and pre-ſent ſufferings were abſorbed in alarm for her infant, whom ſhe watched inceſſantly : a ſlumber that gave her hopes of its a-mendment, ſucceeded to hours of reſtleſs wailing : ſhe placed the little Elizabeth in her cradle and was beginning to weep her lullaby ; but tears ſhe feared might impair her ſtrength ſtill more ; and ſhe took up a newſpaper which had been ſent up by the miſtreſs of the houſe in the charitable hope of amuſing her melan-choly.—It was a tale of human ſuffer-ings : and ſhe turned from the noon-tide rapine of foreign lands, and the burgla-rious depredation of the metropolis, with

with ſickening diſguſt. The gay chronicle of diſſipation, was ſtill leſs agreeable to the tone of her ſpirits—ſhe ſought the liſt of thoſe whom the grave waited for. She would have paſſed the titled and untitled nuptials, had not names familiar to her, caught her eye:—Lambert's marriage to Lady Jemima Fawley was announced with all the detail and circumſtance of truth! and bowing over the cradle, ſhe fainted at the conviction of his perfidy.

She recovered, before any one had been made aware of her want of aſſiſtance: her child was diſturbed; and ſhe was too weak to ſoothe it, till tears had relieved her burſting heart. She then ſunk unreſiſting into this ſtill lower abyſs of miſery. The world afforded not a ſupport to her ſorrow, and ſhe ceaſed to court its aid.

The

The compaſſion of the woman ſhe lodged with, had been awakened by the unfeeling deſertion of Joanna's ſervant; and in the afternoon of this day, ſhe made her a viſit and expreſſed a benevolent wiſh that ſhe would permit her to be uſeful to her: her ſervices were accepted; and both mother and child were benefited by them. In the lapſe of two days Joanna grew again tolerably calm. She kept her griefs concealed; and as yet could not reſolve on any ſtep, even to avert the impending horrors of poſitive want. Little hope remained of her ever again receiving the ſmalleſt comfort from the author of her woes. She conſidered herſelf as abandoned in the moſt cruel way; and though revenge was as far from her wiſh as from her power, ſhe could not but reſent the unprovoked injuries ſhe had ſuffered from caprice.

For her infant alone ſhe was anxious. Could ſhe have depoſited the invaluable charge

charge with any faithful friend, her wiſh to die inſtantly would have aided the tendency of all her miſeries; but where could ſhe look for protection for a baby in a world ſo hoſtile to its mother?—Again ſhe thought of Lord Armathwaite; but to open any communication with him, was hazardous to the peace ſhe hoped to die in. Of Mrs. Halnaby, owing to her own change of ſituation, as ſhe ſuppoſed, ſhe had heard nothing ſince her marriage—ſhe wiſhed it was poſſible to find out her preſent retreat; but to attempt it was difficult.

She was indulging in theſe hopeleſs meditations, with her baby upon her lap, in the evening of the third day after her maid had left her, when the ſudden ſtopping of a carriage at the door, made her lean forward to the window—ſhe ſaw a poſt-chaiſe with four hired horſes; and the light juſt ſerved for her to perceive a gentleman enter the houſe.—She began to fear the admiſſion

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admiſſion of new inmates; and her unprotected ſituation ſtruck her recollection. In a few minutes the miſtreſs of the houſe came up with a letter in her hand—ſhe ſaid nothing, and went out of the room as ſhe had delivered it. Joanna went towards the fire to read by its light, and to her infinite ſurpriſe, and, for the firſt moment, with inexpreſſible joy, ſhe ſaw Lord Armathwaite's ſignature to the following lines:

"FORGIVE my precipitation—it was impoſſible for me to act at a diſtance: the miſerable anxiety I have ſuffered ever ſince you left the country, has been ended by, if poſſible, a more miſerable diſcovery; and my numberleſs enquiries to learn your fate are anſwered by hearing that you are wretched.—How I learnt this I will tell you when we meet—do not be alarmed—truſt to my unalterable love for you that I have ſufficient command of myſelf to offer you only my friendſhip

and

and moſt zealous ſervices—O why did I, from a romantic idea of friendſhip, expoſe you to all theſe miſeries?—better would it have been to have riſqued every thing, and made you my own; but be aſſured, my beloved Joanna, you have in me a friend who will now hazard every thing to place you in eaſe and ſecurity. Suffer me, I beſeech you, to ſee you."

The palpitation of her heart was too violent to leave her the power of any exertion, even had ſhe been reſolved; but to reſolve was impoſſible. The wretched unbefriended ſtate ſhe was reduced to, made the intervention of almoſt any fellow-creature a deſirable bleſſing; but here if ſhe ſhould accept the perhaps well intentioned offer of Lord Armathwaite, ſhe muſt admit to confidence and privacy, the man ſhe ſtill loved too warmly to think on with indifference, who loved her, ſhe was convinced, with a ſtill more ardent paſſion, and who knew not only her partial-

ity

ity towards him, but the extent and ſteadineſs of her affection. There was virtue enough in their mutual attachment to miſlead them into an opinion that it could never be culpable. With the humility which is the grace of our religious profeſſion, Joanna prayed that temptation might not be added to her liſt of ſufferings; and taking part of the paper his lordſhip's letter was written on, ſhe was beginning to write a requeſt to diſpenſe with his viſit, when the woman of the houſe again entered, and introduced Lord Armathwaite. Joanna endeavoured to combat her extreme perturbation, and dropping into a chair in ſilence, and with looks averted to hide her emotion, ſcarcely heard his re-iterated profeſſions of ſurpriſe and attachment. She could not aſk him, nor did he tell her, how he had gained intelligence of her: his reſentment towards Mr. Byram, and his concern for Joanna's immediate ſufferings wholly occupied him.

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A torrent of tears, ill calculated to confirm her lover's heart to its duties, and ſteel it againſt her perſonal attractions, were the prelude to her voice. She begged to be left to the fate Heaven ſeemed to have decreed for her: ſhe repreſented the change that had taken place in their ſituations as an inſurmountable obſtacle to any aſſiſtance ſhe could receive from him, and ſhe lamented as an added misfortune, that chance which had brought him to the knowledge of her exiſtence.

Lord Armathwaite tried to calm and re aſſure her: he expreſſed his pity for her, and his reſpect for the ſituation ſhe had made her choice. To give her time to recover, he would have careſſed her child, who with the earneſtneſs of its babyhood, was playing with its fingers in the cradle; but ſome ſentiment not to be defined, excited Joanna's abhorrence of his lordſhip's fondneſs: ſhe ſcarcely herſelf knew why ſhe removed the child to a diſ-

a diſtance from him, and tried to exclude him even from the ſight of it.

She grew more compoſed: ſhe wiſhed to know who had told him ſhe was in diſtreſs: he ſtill ſeemed deſirous of ſeeing more of the child; ſhe again ſtrove to prevent it, and rang the bell to requeſt the miſtreſs of the houſe to take the charge of it during his viſit—the ſummons was anſwered by her own ſervant who had ſo abruptly left her! Joanna ſtarted with ſurpriſe, and queſtioning her as to her ſudden return, was anſwered by Lord Armathwaite, who declared himſelf indebted to this ſimple girl for the tidings he had received. With tears of fidelity and many apologies for the liberty ſhe had taken, ſhe confeſſed to her miſtreſs that, fearing her melancholy would kill her, and knowing enough from what ſhe had told her, to believe Lord Armathwaite the only friend ſhe could depend on, ſhe had wiſhed to make him acquainted

acquainted with her ſituation: but that being unable to write, and unwilling to truſt any but herſelf, ſhe had demanded her diſmiſſion that ſhe might have money ſufficient to pay her expences, and had gone to Lord Armathwaite's houſe near Reading. She added that her dear miſtreſs needed to be under no fear from any thing ſhe might have ſaid amongſt her own friends; for that ſhe had carefully avoided ſeeing any one who knew her.

In the extreme, though perhaps injudicious benevolence of the action, all ſenſe of relative ſituation was effaced from Joanna's mind, and throwing her arms round the neck of her frighted maid, ſhe with tears expreſſed her obligation. She felt not quite the forlorn creature ſhe had fancied herſelf but a few minutes before. She committed Elizabeth to the girl's care, and with tolerable ſteadineſs, entered into converſation with Lord Armathwaite, who

was

was bent on a public appeal to juſtice againſt Mr. Byram; but to this Joanna would on no account conſent: ſhe founded her objections on regard for Lady Jemima, and her reſentment of the ill treatment ſhe had received from the man to whom legal meaſures muſt, if ſucceſsful, unite her again; and ſhe declared her poſitive reſolution never to lend even the countenance of her name to them. She thought it was not impoſſible that ſhe might procure from Mr. Byram the proviſion he had offered her; and could ſhe find her old friend Mrs. Halnaby, the utmoſt of her wiſhes would be to retire to her protection.

" But would you not conſent to a previous divorce, if it could be obtained—a diſſolution of your marriage if it could be effected?" ſaid Lord Armathwaite with an energy that ſeemed too much like a wiſh at leaſt to reduce obſtacles.

" By

" By no means," replied Joanna—" I will do nothing to injure my little girl in the eye of the world. If ſhe is known only as my daughter, it may be ſuppoſed her father died in her infancy; but if ſhe becomes an object of diſpute, the impediments to her being reſpectable, will be greater than ſhe may be able to encounter, when barbarity and the grave have left her an orphan."

" Do not talk ſo," ſaid his lordſhip: " neither you, my Joanna, nor your child ſhall ever want the aids of a huſband or a parent. I can ſurely protect you while I live; and galling as is my ſituation, I will redouble my aſſiduities towards a woman, whom but for your ſake I hate, that ſhe may leave me what will ſecure you when I ceaſe to exiſt. Long I cannot endure the tortures I am doomed to bear, which every day are rendered ſharper—Is it not enough that I have loſt you? that I am doomed to be the ſlave of age accompanied

nied with whatever can render it contemptible and diſguſting? but muſt I ſee you wretched? and even I—I be the author of your wretchedneſs?—it is *my* ſiſter who has been your bane.—To humor her I have forwarded the marriage; and if there is a being you would curſe, in juſtice, it is myſelf.—Believe me, my Joanna; for I cannot hide my heart; I have heaped miſeries on my head, not to ſerve myſelf, but thoſe I thought you loved.—I could not juſtify to my conſcience the ſeeing a fellow-creature doom himſelf by ſuicide to perdition, while I had the means for his reſcue in my power; but, ſtill, my Joanna, I am the ſame you once knew me: I believe I have been weak—perhaps it was not incumbent on me to riſque ſo much—the event makes me think myſelf wrong; for you are involved in my miſery, and I have not the power to extricate you. Would you but conſent to the annulling your marriage, I could place you in quiet ſecurity, where I might

might have at leaſt the ſtolen happineſs of viſiting and comforting you till the courſe of a few years ſhould have liberated me, when I would ratify all our vows, and be the guardian of your future peace."

This was the language Joanna dreaded to hear; and ſhe ſaw Lord Armathwaite's deception of himſelf, in fancying he could thus exerciſe his benevolence uninfluenced by paſſion. She was convinced that his protection was not to be accepted; and foreſeeing that ſhe muſt deny herſelf a ſecond interview with him, ſhe endeavoured to turn his thoughts, and to ſerve herſelf, by enquiring after her former friends.

She learnt that Mrs. Rufford had found compaſſion amongſt the pariſhioners of her late huſband, that his creditors had ſuffered her to avail herſelf of the benefits of a ſale of his effects, which had produced her a ſum adequate to the purchaſe of a ſmall annuity, which added to

the charitable bounty allowed to her as related to the church, would enable her to live exempt from penury; and that ſhe was gone to London with her daughter. Mrs. Halnaby, ſhe had the conſolation of hearing, was relieved by the death of her worthleſs ſon, from the ruin he had prepared for her. She was then in France, where ſhe meant to continue for the remainder of her life, or till her frugality ſhould have retrieved her circumſtances. Joanna was comforted by hearing that Mrs. Halnaby correſponded regularly with Lord Armathwaite, and never omitted her hopeleſs enquiries after her unfortunate favourite, whom the malice of the Ruffords had induſtriouſly repreſented as a prodigy of every ſpecies of iniquity.

CHAP. XVI.

Lord Armathwaite prolonged his viſit till Joanna began to fear he had loſt the fortitude that ſhould have enabled him to quit her. He indulged in unavailing repetitions of blaſted hopes, and cruel diſappointments: he fed his fancy by portraits of miſery, and ſunk into diſtraction of thought. Joanna had expreſſed her ſenſe of his friendſhip as far as her prudence warranted: ſhe had promiſed to conſult him in whatever ſteps ſhe ſhould take; and, to give him courage, affected it herſelf; but no implied adieu had any effect on her lover. He remained ſilent: he then begged to ſee Elizabeth; the child was now aſleep, and ſhe refuſed to diſturb her. She was driven to the neceſſity of requeſting him ſo far to conſult her eaſe, as

to leave her. She bid him conſider what appearance ſo unſeaſonable a viſit muſt have in the eyes of thoſe in the houſe. He talked wildly and contemptuouſly of the world and its opinions; he reverted to his unalterable paſſion for her; he tried to make a reciprocal declaration of conſtancy on her part the price of his withdrawing: ——ſhe aſſured him of her friendſhip and eſteem, while he acquieſced in her plans, and conformed to her ſenſe of decorum. At length he went away; but it was madly, and not till he had made her promiſe to reſort to him in all emergencies.

If the day had been productive of perturbation, it had in ſome meaſure atoned for it, by the good it had produced, in the return of her ſervant, whom ſhe now valued more than ever, and in the opportunity Lord Armathwaite's viſit had given her of opening a communication with Mrs. Halnaby; and ſhe retired to reſt grateful for theſe comforts. But neither the paſt

nor

nor the future, however fertile the one had been in ſorrows, or however barren the other ſeemed of hope, could ſo occupy her thoughts, as to exclude her own almoſt natural ſentiments for Lord Armathwaite. To her love and eſteem was now added, not only her pity, but her anxious fear leſt the conſtancy of his paſſion for her ſhould add to the wreck of all his worldly happineſs, that of his intellects. She dreaded, leſt human fortitude ſhould not be able to ſupport wounds never ſuffered to heal, but which hourly cruelty made rankle afreſh; ſhe feared too, leſt the human heart could not be ſo nicely balanced as not to lean to the ſide of frailty:——ſhe feared ſhe muſt not truſt him.

The obvious probability of his returning had not ſtruck her recollection; when, on her leaving her chamber the next morning, to dreſs her child by the only fire ſhe allowed herſelf, ſhe found him ſitting in the room they had parted in the preceding

evening. He excuſed his intruſion by the recollection of a particular matter, on which he wiſhed to ſpeak to her. It was a deſire to find out, from her converſation, what degree of affection ſhe had ever borne towards the man ſhe had married, that was moſt evident in his queſtions. She anſwered him without diſguiſe. He did not ſeem cheered by the command ſhe had held over her heart; but he commended, with the ingenuouſneſs of honeſt praiſe, her inflexible integrity.

She talked with leſs embarraſſment than the preceding evening, and ſeemed to gain an aſcendancy over his mind by the candour of her own. The ſame averſion to his attention to her child exiſted in her feelings: ſhe covered it up, and nurſed it to ſleep again. He was again as curious, and deſiſted only that he might not give her pain, when he ſaw that her tears accompanied her refuſal.

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He replied to her fearful cautions againſt viſiting her, by aſſuring her he was on the point of returning home; and promiſed, if ſhe would write daily to him, and receive his letters as often, while ſhe remained in difficulties, that he would never viſit her but at her requeſt. At parting he was again perturbed, and incoherent; but his reaſon was victorious, and Joanna's mind was relieved.

Her firſt occupation, when ſhe had, with an aching heart, watched him to the corner of the row ſhe lived in, was to write to Mrs. Halnaby a full account of herſelf.—She enjoined her friend ſecreſy, and entreated her to put her in ſome way of coming to her. Her ſpirits were a little relieved by theſe events, and ſhe gained ſtrength while ſhe waited Mrs. Halnaby's reply.

The conduct of the woman with whom ſhe lodged, in a few days, gave her freſh

uneaſineſs. She had heard a violent contention between her and her faithful maid-ſervant, which ended in a viſit from the former, who began a very ſtately diſcourſe, by inſinuations which gave her to underſtand ſhe had not much credit of character with her. The delicacy of the good lady had not been hurt by a ſuppoſition, it appeared ſhe had hitherto maintained, that Joanna was merely the *protegée*, and not the wife, of Mr. Byram; but the viſit from Lord Armathwaite, whoſe name had been kept ſecret from her, had raiſed her curioſity and ſuſpicion, which had been confirmed by the maid-ſervant's paying for ſome trifling articles with a bank note, undoubtedly, in the landlady's opinion, the bounty of the ſtrange gentleman: and ſo, indeed, it was, though unknown to Joanna. He knew the miſtreſs too well to offer her money; he knew her diſtreſſes too well to leave her without ſuch ſuccour; he had therefore depoſited it with the ſervant;

vant; and Joanna had not obſerved that ſhe had not been called on for money.

She endeavoured to clear herſelf of the laſt ſuſpicion, by expreſſing her abhorrence of the former; but the old lady knew the world too well to be credulous, and was growing rather too free in her cenſures; till Joanna, with a degree of ſpirit ſhe did not expect from a lady ſo circumſtanced, threatened to quit her houſe. She then cooled, retracted, apologized, and ſidled out of the room.

No more was heard of this matter. A brief letter came from Mr. Byram, incloſing the papers neceſſary to putting Joanna in poſſeſſion of the thouſand pounds he had promiſed her; and the ſame poſt brought her a much more welcome return from Mrs. Halnaby, in which, with all the tenderneſs of a parent, ſhe expreſſed her ſympathy in her ſufferings, and encouraged

her to bear up under them. She acquieſced both in her wiſh to leave Byram unmoleſted, and in that ſhe had formed of coming to live near her, which ſhe hoped to be able in a very few months to gratify her in, as ſhe was taking meaſures for returning to England, though not to her former ſituation. She had a houſe, in a moſt ſecluded ſituation, at Chartham, in Kent: it was preparing for her; and there ſhe conjured her dear Joanna to meet her, and fix her abode, with her infant and her benevolent ſervant. She farther inſiſted on her exonerating the perfidious Lambert from all charge reſpecting her, and promiſed, on this condition, to conſider her wholly as her daughter.

The contents of this letter ſeemed more than to repay all Joanna's previous ſufferings; and in her correſpondence with this kind friend and Lord Armathwaite, ſhe beguiled the weeks of waiting. His

lord.

lordſhip's letter confirmed her in the propriety of her caution: they diſplayed the moſt honeſt heart, the warmeſt charity;—but the ſpirit of fervent love was prevalent in them: he himſelf felt the neceſſity of abſence, and his reaſon aided his morality.

CHAP. XVII.

THE time for Mrs. Halnaby's return drew near; the day was fixed, and no new diſaſter had recurred to diſturb the almoſt placid Joanna. She looked forward to the future, if not with joy or hope, yet without the agonies of incertitude. She endeavoured to conſider herſelf as a widow returning to an affectionate parent; and in the rearing her promiſing little girl, ſhe ſaw ſome compenſation of pleaſure for the anxieties ſhe had on her account endured.

She had remained in this amended ſituation nearly three months, when ſhe was a little alarmed by perceiving a degree of goſſiping intimacy between Nelly and a young man who appeared to be a lodger at an oppoſite houſe. She queſtioned the girl

girl on the ſubject, and learnt that their new neighbour was a relation of the woman he lodged with, who was *a very good ſort of woman*, and that he was received by Nelly in quality of a lover. She ſeemed perfectly informed of every circumſtance reſpecting his ſtation and proſpects in the world, and ſet him forth as endued with all the virtues of humble life. He was, Nelly ſaid, the ſon of a ſubſtantial farmer: he himſelf was journeyman to a conſiderable dealer in London, the air of which place not agreeing with him, he had left his ſituation, was come to this village to regain his health, and propoſed ſettling in his own country (Ireland) in his father's occupation. Nelly confeſſed that ſhe had told him her miſtreſs's plan of retiring into Kent, which ſeemed exactly to ſuit his wiſhes; and, that he might not remove her from a miſtreſs ſhe was ſo attached to, he promiſed, if ſhe would conſent to marry him, that he would give up his Hibernian ſcheme, and, as he was ſure he could,

find

find a farm at Chartham that would ſuit them.

Joanna was too benevolent not to enter with pleaſure into a plan that ſeemed to inſure the happineſs of two deſerving young people. The man appeared deſirous of recommending himſelf to her good opinion; and, as he was out of all employment, would frequently amuſe himſelf by nurſing the little Elizabeth, and giving her that exerciſe which her thriving conſtitution and increaſing weight made fatiguing to Nelly. He would often walk out with the child, and ſhewed ſo much care and tenderneſs, that Joanna had no fear, till one day he remained out ſo much longer than uſual, that ſhe began to apprehend the little girl might ſuffer. She, however, waited patiently, as long as ſhe could ſuppoſe him only indiſcreet. She then went out herſelf; but not ſeeing him near the houſe, ſhe returned, declared her fears, and ſent Nelly to ſeek him. Nelly

came

came back with all the marks of terror in her countenance, for her ſearch had not availed. Every one who could be engaged in the ſervice was then diſpatched to make enquiries; but all in vain. Joanna could ſupport her hopes no longer: ſhe was ſcarcely in her ſenſes. All night ſhe waited the tidings of meſſengers ſent different ways; no means were left untried to make her loſs public; but in three days ſhe ceaſed to hope!

She could not believe that the child was ſtolen on the common motives of plunder, for the man's abode in the neighbourhood ſeemed a concerted buſineſs, and connected with ſome ſcheme; but the candour and concern of the woman he had lodged with acquitted her to Joanna's inexperience. The firſt regular ſuſpicion ſhe entertained was, that Lord Armathwaite, out of fondneſs and a deſire againſt her will to do her good, had taken the child, with a view to bring it up with ſuperior advantages.

tages. Without ſtaying to inveſtigate the reaſonableneſs of her conjecture, ſhe wrote to him on this ſuppoſition. His anſwer acquitted him; but he ſuggeſted the probability of Byram's being the perſon; and though he had broken off all intercourſe with him, and conſequently with his ſiſter, he offered to go to him in the north of Ireland, where he now was, on an eſtate called Balla-craig, which his father had given him. His lordſhip, deeply as he felt Joanna's diſtreſs, could not but make it ſubſervient to his own paſſion: he begged permiſſion to come to her, as the beſt means of being ſerviceable to her in her ſearch.

Joanna's feelings, tortured thus by the moſt excruciating ſuſpenſe, could ſcarcely ſupport the delay of the poſt; and when Lord Armathwaite's letter arrived, it ſerved only to deject her entirely. She had almoſt hoped it was he who had been guilty of this pious fraud: ſhe could not believe

lieve Byram was enough intereſted in the fate of perſons he had ſo cruelly neglected, to rob her with a good intention; for an evil one there was no room: the little Elizabeth could have no claims on him that it could be worth his trouble to ſuppreſs by violent means. Joanna would not, however, ſuffer her own judgment to preclude her from even the leaſt ray of hope. She wrote to him briefly, but energetically; ſhe believed that the loſs of her infant would put a period to her earthly ſufferings; ſhe only begged to be aſcertained of its fate.

She had had no power to reply to Lord Armathwaite's requeſt; he therefore conſtrued her ſilence to his advantage, came to town, and ſaw her twice every day.—His kindneſs, in a ſmall degree, ſoothed her; and ſhe endured with patient reſignation the tedious paſſage of the days that muſt elapſe before ſhe could hear from Ireland.

Her

Her ſervant bore not ſo well a misfortune ſhe conſidered herſelf as having cauſed. Nelly was utterly incapacitated, by her violent ſorrow, from attending on her miſtreſs; and Lord Armathwaite found a handſome bribe neceſſary to excite the miſtreſs of the houſe to aſſiſt in her ſtead.—He left nothing undone that the tendereſt affection could dictate for the eaſe of the wretched Joanna; but there was a ſacredneſs in her grief that ſupplied the want of caution on her part; and the moſt ſcrupulous reſerve could not have imputed any thing to his friendſhip inconſiſtent with an affection truly fraternal.

At the expiration of a week from the time of her having written to Byram, ſhe had an unexpected viſit from Mrs. Halnaby, who, not aware of her diſtreſſes, but anxious to abridge the time of their ſeparation, had made a journey to London on purpoſe to remove her to her new abode at Chartham. This kind friend had now

no

no wiſh but to promote Joanna's comforts; ſhe participated all her ſufferings, and determined to wait with her the arrival of Byram's anſwer:——it came as ſoon as could be expected, and was to this purport:—

"I cannot ſo far diſmiſs you from my regard, as to with-hold any conſolation in my power. I confeſs, when I look at my own conduct, I have no right to blame your's; but it is unfit your child ſhould remain with you;—it is I who have taken her from you——ſhe muſt never know you for her mother, nor me for her father; but, truſt me, ſhe ſhall meet with every care ſhe requires. While I am kind to her, I ſhould reſent any attempt on your part to interfere; I would then caſt her off; but if you will remain quiet, and endeavour to forget her and me, ſhe ſhall have no cauſe to complain of

"Your's, &c.

"L. B."

Joanna's

Joanna's fears were alleviated, but her regrets were, if poſſible, more pungent, and ſhe bewailed her loſt infant as conſigned to the grave. As nothing could induce her to appeal to the law againſt the injuſtice ſhe ſuffered under, her friends could preach nothing but ſubmiſſion. Mrs. Halnaby removed her to Chartham, and Lord Armathwaite returned diſconſolate to his melancholy abode. Previous to her departure, Joanna wrote again to Byram. She declared herſelf at a loſs to diſcover what it was in her conduct that demanded the ſtyle of pardon he aſſumed; ſhe profeſſed her ſubmiſſive intentions; ſhe requeſted that he would, occaſionally, give her the pleaſure of knowing Elizabeth was in health; and telling him how ſhe was aided by Mrs. Halnaby's kindneſs, ſhe declined all further remittances from him. This gentle return to ſuch cruel uſage was dictated equally by reſignation of mind and politic regard for her daughter, for whoſe

whoſe ſake ſhe could have borne patiently any infliction.

As ſoon as the conſequences of her ſorrow were ſufficiently removed to allow her to undertake the journey, Mrs. Halnaby conducted her melancholy charge to her humble dwelling in Kent. The beautiful ſcenery of this part of the country ſoon attached both of them to it. Mrs. Halnaby's finances, though they admitted not of the port ſhe had lived in while in Berkſhire, afforded her every neceſſary gratification and convenience. She had been well educated, and was herſelf by nature, and by the diſcipline her mind had undergone, in a world that had been very ſtormy to her, rendered a fit comforter for her beloved Joanna, whom ſhe conſidered as her adopted daughter. She directed her to look for conſolation where ſhe herſelf had never failed to find it under all diſtreſſes——in an integrity of mind, and a reliance on the providential bounty of heaven.

ven. She intereſted her in the attainment of whatever could be uſeful or of advantage to her in the ſituation of her heir; and the ſmall taſte Joanna had had, while under the tyranny of the Ruffords, of the pleaſures to be derived from intellectual purſuits, aided the ſtimulus of Mrs. Halnaby's wiſhes. To exclude her greateſt enemy, reflection, ſhe eagerly engaged herſelf in elegant attainments, till that which had been a ſpecies of ſalutary delirium became, in time, habit, and the general tenor of her mind; and though vivacity, and even chearfulneſs, could never again enter her heart, ſhe was placid, and grateful.

So long a ſpace of time had elapſed without her hearing of her child, or of Byram, anyotherwiſe than by pompous communications in the papers of the increaſe of Lady Jemima's nurſery, that ſhe feared he would not indulge her as ſhe had requeſted.—— She wrote again, moſt humbly; but no

anſwer

anſwer was returned. Lord Armathwaite wrote, but with no better ſucceſs; and, aware of the ſavageneſs of Byram's temper when provoked, ſhe deſiſted.

Thus paſſed days, weeks, months, years. ——Mrs. Halnaby and Joanna were ſo much charmed with Kent, and the picturesque beauties around them, that, when Mrs. Halnaby's œconomy had reſtored her circumſtances, and Lord Armathwaite's leaſe was out, they ſtill declined a change of ſituation.

Lady Armathwaite lived about nine years after this period, and, with unexpected liberality, rewarded her huſband's irreproachable conduct towards her, by a bequeſt of all ſhe poſſeſſed. He was now at liberty, and in a ſtate of ſuperior affluence; but he was miſerable; for Joanna, though ſtill conſtant in her attachment to him, and urged both by him and her friend to take a legal opinion on the point

of

of annulling her marriage, was too ſcrupulous, and too compleatly diſguſted with the idea of a freſh ſearch after happineſs, to ſuffer any ſtep towards this end to be taken. His lordſhip, therefore, finding the quiet of home unfriendly to him, intereſted himſelf in the buſtle of army politics; and procuring a military appointment, went abroad; keeping up a regular correſpondence with Mrs. Halnaby and Joanna.

CHAP. XVIII.

The conduct of Byram requires an explanation, beſt given by an inveſtigation of his motives, and a detail of the events which were to reward him for the painful renunciation of his wayward heart's firſt poſſeſſions—a renunciation ſtill more infamous than galling, and rendered ſtill more criminal by the reluctance his very nature felt in making it.

His inertneſs of mind had firſt made him capricious in his ſituation as a huſband and a father. He had not that ſpirit of induſtry which converts buſineſs into pleaſure; his heart was not good enough to preſent to his imagination, as rewards, thoſe for whom he ought to have laboured: to procure relief from *ennui*, he was expenſive; as ſoon as poverty threat-

ened, he grew, not vigilant, but ſullen: he ſought pleaſures ſtill more obliterating than the common diſſipations of life: theſe rendered inſipid all the calm enjoyments of home, and detached his affections from its inhabitants. He became firſt deſperate, then cruel; and conſidering his juvenile paſſion for Joanna Doveridge as the cauſe of all his embarraſſments, his reſentment fell upon her. The temptation his father had held out to him when he offered him not only an emancipation from his debts, but a ſtate of affluence, on the ſole condition of marrying Lady Jemima Fawley, was too ſtrong for his unprincipled mind, now that its tie to Joanna was broken; for Lambert's conſcience needed not only the fear of puniſhment on the one hand to deter it from ill, but the bribe of a reward on the other, to allure it to what was good; and when left to itſelf, it yielded to the firſt proffered convenience. By ſtudying the characters of thoſe ſummer birds,

birds, women of faſhion, he learnt to correct his judgment, which ſoon convinced him that Joanna, however amiable, was a wearifome piece of ſtill life, and that vivacity and volatility, as they were natural, were highly becoming to women.

Lord Armathwaite paid with his ſiſter's fortune the laſt thouſand pounds of his own property. Lady Jemima who with all her frivolity, did not want for ſelf-love, foreſaw in Byram's deficiency of prompt affection for her, frequent uneaſineſſes, when thoſe expences ſhe meant to indulge in without meaſure, ſhould come under his cogniſance. She therefore prevailed on his beſotted father, not only to make all neceſſary arrangements, in caſe a ſeparation ſhould ſuit their tempers better than union; but to allot her a diſtinct purſe, over which her huſband ſhould have no controul: it was to conſiſt of a ſpecific ſum in the funds, of which the principal and intereſt were to be wholly her own,

both as to temporary enjoyment and future diſpoſition, out of which ſhe was to furniſh her equipage, all her perſonal expences and *menus plaiſirs.* In ſhort, it was ſo contrived as that her ladyſhip might partake all the benefits of her huſband's fortune, and add every extravagance this ſeparate dower could afford. The ſequel will ſhew her ſagacity.

In Byram's character, in his verſatility of affection, which was ſwayed wholly by his intereſts; and in the prophetic negligence with which he began to treat his new wife, almoſt as ſoon as he was married to her, Lord Armathwaite ſaw ſo much to dread, that he thought the only method to avoid an open rupture, was by ceaſing to be an obſerver of his behaviour. He imputed that to Byram as decided turpitude, which perhaps was the laſt ſpark of expiring virtue, and when perhaps his benumbed conſcience felt the pungent tooth

of

of remorſe, he ſeemed the leaſt alive to human affections.

Her ladyſhip, not a whit more amiable or more honeſt, no ſooner felt herſelf in poſſeſſion of wealth, and the title of matrimony, than ſhe quarrelled with her brother, for adviſing her to be cautious, provoked her huſband's father by openly laughing at him for his infirmities, and rendered Byram ridiculous, by declaring her reſolution and her power of governing him.

A very few weeks, a very few hours of cloying diſſipation, which forces the mind back upon itſelf, made Lambert think ſeriouſly of his conduct, and wiſh himſelf almoſt in the embarraſſed ſituation he had plunged from. To extricate himſelf was impoſſible: to bear what he ſuffered daily from his wife and his conſcience, was almoſt as difficult, and he was aſhamed to confeſs to any one the nefarious part he

had acted: he had no hope of mitigating the agonies of his mind, but by an endeavour to awaken the compaſſion of Joanna: he flattered himſelf that could he procure a ſeparation from Lady Jemima, which he did not doubt, if he once provoked her, he might prevail on his former wife to remain in a ſtate of obſcure marriage, in which he meant to afford her every comfort conſiſtent with ſecrecy, and to indulge himſelf as much as poſſible in her ſociety.

Not daring to truſt this important commiſſion to paper, he quitted Ireland, and came privately to Joanna's lodgings ſhortly after Lord Armathwaite had found her. The officious woman of the houſe believing Joanna no otherwiſe a wife than by conſent, informed him of his lordſhip's viſits and the conſequent circumſtances which with all neceſſary details of connection ſhe had artfully obtained from Nelly. Lambert's mind was wounded: he forbore

bore ſeeing Joanna, who was out with her maid and child, and returned home diſappointed.

Deſtitute of every comfort, while he enjoyed in their fulleſt extent all the gratifications, he had ſo dearly purchaſed, he turned his aching thoughts towards the little Elizabeth: he wiſhed her near him, and removed from a mother whom he conſidered himſelf as having rendered faulty: as he knew perſuaſion would have no effect, he took the violent means of ſtealing the infant, and introducing it to Lady Jemima as the offspring of a juvenile amour; her ladyſhip neither nice nor affectionate, declared he might do what he would with the brat, provided ſhe was not troubled with it: he therefore had it nurſed at the country houſe, and found ſome conſolation in ſtealing down to weep over it.

Byram judged as ill of Lady Jemima, if he ſuppoſed ſhe would be a torment increaſing in proportion to the lapſe of time, as he did of himſelf when he firſt believed he could be ſteady in his love for Joanna, or happy when he had abandoned her. Her ladyſhip's temper and opinion were as variable as her faſhions; and neither of them in general laſted long enough to ſtay for criticiſm. She was not yet malignant: her mind never reſted ſufficiently to ruſt on a ſubject; ſhe had but one purſuit, and that was pleaſure or rather *envy*, which ſhe courted with avidity. To dazzle, to overpower, to mortify, were Lady Jemima's joys. To an unobſerving eye ſhe had all the evil attributes of an evil diſpoſition; but her character was, at preſent, too negative for theſe determinate features: her mind was in a perpetual whirl of childiſh purſuit; ſhe had rather not time for virtue, than any poſitive vice in her compoſition.

At the close of the first year, she brought a daughter, and Byram who fancied her humour rather mended in the last three months, waited for the dawnings of that maternal love which had once so endeared Joanna to him; but he waited in vain: the child was sent to a cabin to be nurst, because some of the most dissipated ladies of fashion in Dublin had found this method of exonerating their arms, answer without injury to their consciences; the unimpeded atmosphere and rustic diet of the peasantry, having proved beneficial to the young charge. Byram's capricious heart was now so fixed on his Elizabeth, that he suffered Lady Jemima to please herself in this particular. Indulgence had a good effect: she was surprized and pleased with the perfect power she enjoyed: having nothing to oppose her, she became good humoured; and the liberality of Byram's father which put him in possession of as large an income as most commoners in Ireland enjoyed,

ſeemed completely to fix her a gay and agreeable woman. Her huſband was not proof againſt the faſcinations of her vivacity: he left his Elizabeth without agonizing regret to the care of her nurſe, and betook himſelf with Lady Jemima to Dublin, in the diſſipations of which place he ſeemed to loſe all diſtreſſing remembrances: he took a leading part in politics, became a diſtinguiſhed character in parliament, while his lady at the caſtle outblazed all who had leſs money or more good ſenſe: from Dublin they made an excurſion to London, where another daughter was born, and put out to nurſe: two years nearly elapſed before they reviſited Ireland; and almoſt another before their ſeat at Balla-craig had any allurements for them.

At length Byram, half ſurfeited with heaping pleaſures to ſtifle reflection, returned home, in expectation of the novel though melancholy joy of ſeeing his little

tle girl grown, and improved in infant powers. She had been ſo little noticed by her ladyſhip, that it would have been preſumption to obtrude her on her ſight; but ſhe was carried into a diſtant apartment, where her father ſtill alive to ſentiments of affection for her, with rapture ſaw in her every promiſe that could juſtify his love, or repay him in future for the anxiety her education, under ſuch adverſe circumſtances, muſt coſt him. She was pretty, ſhe ſhewed ſigns of a good underſtanding, of affection and gratitude, and by a tranſient look, ſhe now and then to his joy and puniſhment, brought her mother to his remembrance.

In a houſe ſpacious and detached as his was, it was no difficult matter to procure her every advantage of tuition, and keep her from giving offence to Lady Jemima, whom ſhe was ſedulouſly inſtructed to treat with the utmoſt deference. Her ladyſhip, in the improvement

of her temper, ſeemed to have acquired ſome degrees of humanity towards the unhappy child; and would ſometimes condeſcend to ſpeak kindly to her and to careſs her: this good diſpoſition was encouraged by the bewitching blandiſhment of her age, her beauty and her helpleſſneſs; and Lady Jemima began to fancy herſelf ſo extremely fond of children, that ſhe reſolved on having the two Miſs Byrams home, and placing them together with Elizabeth, under the ſame governeſs. This ſcheme met, not only with Byram's aſſent, but demanded his gratitude. It was carried, with her ladyſhip's uſual velocity, into execution, and Elizabeth began her ſtudies with her two half ſiſters; but ſhe had unfortunately advantages in the affection of her father, and the governeſs recommended to Lady Jemima, which the total inattention in which the more fortunate young ladies had been reared, together with their inferiority of age, denied them: Elizabeth could

read,

read, when neither Miſs Byram, nor Miſs Arabella knew their alphabet. She was their ſuperior in beauty and intellectual endowments, and the eldeſt having, through the inadvertence of her nurſe, had a fall which was never confeſſed, but which ſhewed itſelf in an obliquity of ſhape, there was little hope of her taking her place as the eldeſt heireſs of ſo illuſtrious a family, with that *eclat* which would gratify her mother's ambition, or obſcure the merit of her humble competitor. Lady Jemima ſaw and felt all theſe untoward diſadvantages: they vexed her; ſhe had too much ſelf-love to diſlike her own girls, for their want of recommendations: ſhe therefore began to hate poor Elizabeth for ſhewing her by ſo ſtriking a compariſon, how little power ſhe had over Nature's bounty: and Byram perceiving the change, would have removed his darling daughter: but this he ſoon found would be to make Lady Jemima her open enemy. He therefore ſubmitted to hear her contume-

liouſly

liouſly ſpoken of, and to ſee her moſt unjuſtly decided againſt, in all queſtions of right amongſt the children, endeavouring in private, and by every kindneſs that could ſoothe her, to repay her for her ſufferings. She was meek and forgiving: ſhe had always been taught to look up to the Miſs Byrams as infinitely exalted above *Elizabeth*, which was the only name ſhe knew herſelf by: ſhe thus leſſened all their triumphs by her patience; and frequently by allowing them to go to the moſt abſurd extremities of malice, ſhe defeated their purpoſes of bringing imputations on her, and rendered their actions the evidence of her innocence.

It was however impoſſible for her to lead a comfortable, or even a quiet life, while the young ladies had her within their reach; but they were occaſionally removed to Dublin or London, with their mamma, whom a ſpirit of oppoſition led for a ſhort time to take the moſt aſſiduous

care

care of their education. She grew dis-contented with the governeſs, and while therefore they were receiving inſtructions from maſters ill choſen but profuſely paid, Elizabeth was happy in the care of a ſen-ſible woman, who foſtered every virtue and every elegance of her mind, and ren-dered her at fourteen, one of the moſt accompliſhed girls of her age.

CHAP. XIX.

LADY Jemima had, long before this period, grown weary of the houſe in the north; or rather the compariſon between Elizabeth and her daughters had become intolerable. She therefore remained in Dublin, or varied the ſcene by a viſit to England, leaving her daughters, whom ſhe could not introduce without appearing older than ſhe liked to be thought, under the care of bad ſervants and negligent teachers; for her fervor of education was ſoon cooled, and her patience wearied in the courſe of a very few years, which diſcovered to her, that correction produced ſullenneſs; flattery, conceit; and zeal, oppoſition; as often as ſhe addreſſed herſelf to the rational faculties of her hopeful progeny.

Her

Her ladyſhip's factitious ſtock of perſonal attractions giving way as ſoon as the ſeaſon of youth was over, her mind was now occupied in the repair of her charms; and envious of the younger beauties ſhe ſaw ſpringing up, ſhe ſought the repair of her vivacity, and the attention of the gay, by a ſort of flirtation which required little heart, and great addreſs, to keep it within the bounds of innocence. Byram ſaw her conduct without concern; for he had ceaſed to be intereſted in any thing reſpecting her, and in their mutual caprice they had become mutually indifferent; but he could not always be deaf to what was ſaid of her extreme gaiety, nor to his father's remonſtrances on the reports of her light conduct: he therefore changing his plan, ſpent moſt of his time in the north, much to the advantage and delight of his promiſing daughter. Many uneaſy hours his reflections on his own conduct, on that which he too lightly ſuppoſed to have been her mother's, and on her future fate, coſt him.

him. He had as yet, nothing but a yearly income, derived from his father's liberality: it was abundant in itſelf; but Lady Jemima could have ſpent the revenue of a monarch, and ſeldom left him a ſuperfluity: he could neither transfer, in caſe he had an opportunity of ſettling Elizabeth, nor bequeath, in caſe of his own death. How he ſhould introduce her to the world, and procure her any friend but himſelf, he was at a loſs to determine.

It was death to him to think of a ſeparation from her; yet to keep her in a ſituation, which bad roads, a country not at all populous, and her want of protection muſt often render a ſolitude, was not an eligible plan to promote her happineſs. Sometimes he thought of endeavouring to trace her mother, and committing her to her charge; but ſhame, fear, love, every thing oppoſed this meaſure; and he ſuffered year after year to find Elizabeth improved in every thing, but that eſſential requiſite to life, knowledge of the world.

She,

She, on her part, felt not unfrequently a wiſh for ſociety. She had heard from the un-child-like Miſs Byrams accounts of the metropolis of each kingdom, that made her curious; and when the buſtle which Lady Jemima, her retinue, and her company always occaſioned, while they reſided there, was ſucceeded by the undiſturbed quiet and the ecchoing emptineſs of the houſe, ſhe could not always repreſs a ſigh of regret and diſcontent. A few days, however, generally convinced her that the abſence of the young ladies was, at any rate, a bleſſing: ſhe called herſelf childiſh for admitting ſuch regrets, and ungrateful to her father for being diſcontented, when he was ſo liberal, and ſhe had ſo little claim on him. She endeavoured by induſtry to exclude idle wiſhes, and to render herſelf worthy of the bleſſings ſhe enjoyed. What ſhe read convinced her, that to eſcape the evils of life is to be poſitively happy: ſhe ſaw herſelf in peace, ſafety, affluence and health; and her ſerious turn of mind

taught

taught her, that to admit the ill qualities of temper, was at once to poiſon all preſent enjoyment, and to give up all claim to future comfort.

The perſon who had educated her was well formed to teach one whoſe fate was uncertain; for ſhe had been ſchooled in the ſharpeſt diſcipline of adverſity. She was well born, and had all the elegance of true gentility about her: ſhe had been, in her youth, credulous and ſuſceptible, had conducted herſelf with integrity and prudence, and had renounced her inclinations to adhere to her duty. She had ſeen the world in its deluſions; ſhe had ſeen it without its maſk: ſhe did not teach her pupil that it was a path wholly compoſed either of briars or roſes; but ſhe told her how the one might be converted into the other. She knew the intrinſic worth of what are called accompliſhments: ſhe conſidered them as uſeful and neceſſary to a reſpectable appearance in the world; but

ſtill more valuable, as affording the moſt elegant modes of ſpending time, and improving the faculties. Beyond all theſe in importance, ſhe placed real knowledge and ſound morality: ſhe taught Elizabeth a habit of ſubduing herſelf, which made the taſk pleaſant, and gave her the beſt command over her paſſions. She made it entertaining to her ſagacity to diſcover in nice points what was her duty; and, aided by the moſt docile diſpoſition, ſhe enabled her to put this knowledge in practice.

Such was the perſon, whom at fifteen years of age, Elizabeth found herſelf, by a fever of a few days, deprived of! Her father was at the time with her; and though himſelf greatly hurt at an event which ſo increaſed his difficulties, and greatly dejected in the general temper of his ſpirits by his inceſſant uneaſineſſes, yet he ſtrove to comfort her; and as ſoon as poſſible, placed near her, in the ſame ſituation her valuable friend had occupied,

a woman

a woman of much more ſhewy recommendations, but not her equal in ſterling merit. It mattered little at the time; for Elizabeth's heart was formed to admit no ſecond affection; ſhe treated her new governeſs with reſpect; but her ſpirit never roſe after the loſs of her predeceſſor.

There was a cloud ſpread, as it were, by the hand of Nature, over Elizabeth at her birth, and which every circumſtance of her exiſtence, as it unfolded itſelf to her perception, ſeemed to increaſe. The firſt ſentiment ſhe could remember, was that of fear of Lady Jemima: ſhe ſoon was aware that her father was kind to her by ſtealth: ſhe had been ill treated by her half-ſiſters, and uniformly confined to a ſolitude which every expanding idea convinced her was not the common lot of daughters. She had now loſt the only companion of her hours: every ſtimulative, every reſource, every hope, ſeemed buried with her; and nothing leſs cogent

than

than her father's wiſh would have induced her to improve farther the accompliſhments ſhe had already attained. Byram left her, when he had ſeen her tolerably well reconciled to this firſt grievous wound of her heart, and ſhe endeavoured to extract from induſtry its accuſtomed balm; but the mind muſt be in fit order, or the medicine is inefficacious.

Dublin at this time afforded more than its uſual gaiety. The caſtle was filled by more than Britiſh ſplendor; and an adoring populace were intoxicated by the virtues of the viceroy and his lady. Lady Jemima was all faſhion and celebrity: ſhe yielded in ſhew to few even of ſuperior rank; and Byram was ſilly enough to ſuffer his graver mind to be again ſtaggered by what, in his ſober hours, he deſpiſed, and every moment felt to his coſt. His father's bounty to him had been an inexhauſtible reſource; but her ladyſhip's diſſipations had accumulated debts too large

to

to be brought to account. Of ſome of them he was aware; of others he was ignorant; and at the end of the gay ſeaſon, he found himſelf overwhelmed by demands, debilitated in health, and ſtill more prone than ever to wretched reflections. Neither from his wife nor her daughters was the ſmalleſt conſolation to be derived. Lady Jemima refuſed to retrench for the ſake of œconomy, or to leave Dublin for the ſake of his health. The Miſs Byrams, in attainments children, in pertneſs adults, had learned to re-echo their mamma's opinions: they indeed had little to boaſt from maternal love; but maternal example they could plead; and as they took the ſuperior negligence they lived in, for the indulgence due to a lady of quality's children, they complained of nothing, they conteſted nothing that came from Lady Jemima.

Byram's indiſpoſition increaſing with his melancholy; and his mind finding nothing

thing but Elizabeth, that it could reſt on, he reſolved to viſit again his houſe in the north, alone; and on his arrival there fancied himſelf mended and cheared; but his daughter was alarmed by the rapid alteration ſhe obſerved in him; and her fears proved too juſt; for he had been with her only a fortnight, when his ſymptoms grew alarming. Her tender cares and filial piety ſerved rather to increaſe the dejection that was preying on him, than to ſupport him under it; for in theſe uninterrupted hours of dullneſs, his guilt towards her mother appeared to his fancy, in all its extent of cruel conſequences; and he conſidered himſelf as receiving from Elizabeth thoſe attentions which were not his due. For ſome days together this would ſo operate on his imagination, that he would not ſee her: afterwards his love for her would predominate; he perſuaded himſelf that his kindneſs towards the daughter might, in ſome meaſure atone for his neglect of the mother, and he would not ſuffer her to leave his bed-ſide.

Elizabeth, with the conſent of her governeſs, had written in the moſt reſpectful terms to Lady Jemima, informing her of Mr. Byram's ſituation; and now that his danger increaſed ſo rapidly, ſhe, with a heart almoſt broken, wrote again to her; but neither of her letters was noticed. She, therefore, bent her attention wholly to her father; and, prompted equally by love and duty, ſhe omitted nothing that could by any means conduce to his recovery, or temporary eaſe. She expected every day a viſit from Lady Jemima; and not hoping any indulgence from her lenity, ſhe was ſcrupulous in all her cares; but ſhe watched, and was in readineſs in vain, for to viſit a ſick huſband was the laſt of her ladyſhip's intentions or wiſhes.

After almoſt three months of alternate hope and fear, ſhe was ſummoned at midnight from her bed, where ſhe had juſt thrown herſelf, without undreſſing, by the nurſe, who told her Mr. Byram was dying. She haſtened to him, and found him recovering

covering from a ſevere fit of coughing He was aware that his ſtrength could not long oppoſe attacks ſo often repeated, and with ſuch increaſed violence; the imminence of his danger had fixed his wavering mind, and made him determine on a point he ought long ſince to have determined on, that of telling Elizabeth where, after his deceaſe, ſhe muſt ſeek her mother. He had ſo effectually ſhunned all communication with his former connections, that he had only conjecture as an authority for ſuppoſing his firſt wife ſtill alive, and ſtill reſiding with Mrs. Halnaby in Kent. Of Lord Armathwaite, who had long ceaſed to notice his ſiſter, he knew no more than that death had releaſed him from his counteſs, and that he had gone abroad; but as no return from the army ever mentioned him, it was to be ſuppoſed that he was in no official capacity. In this uncertainty he meant to tell Elizabeth the ſtory of her unfortunate mother; and after giving her all the information in his power, to leave her to chuſe whither

whither ſhe ſhould reſort. With great difficulty he prefaced his narrative, ſo as to prepare her for unexpected communications; but he got no farther than to tell her that he had caſually met her mother firſt at the houſe of a Mr. Rufford, a clergyman in Berkſhire, who had a wife and one daughter, when his cough returned, and he was unable to ſpeak. Recovering himſelf in about a quarter of an hour, he ſent his daughter to his eſcritoire to fetch a ſmall box he directed her to find. She brought it; and he took out of it a ſhagreen caſe, which he put into her hands, and bid her open. She did ſo, and found it contained a miniature picture of a young woman.——"That," ſaid he, "is the picture of your mother—keep it ſafely and ſecretly, till you meet with her; and as ſome doubts may hereafter ariſe about your birth, if any ſuch ſhould occur, look at it, and you will ſee——here his voice again failed—he ſunk exhauſted, and roſe no more to ſenſe or recollection.

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